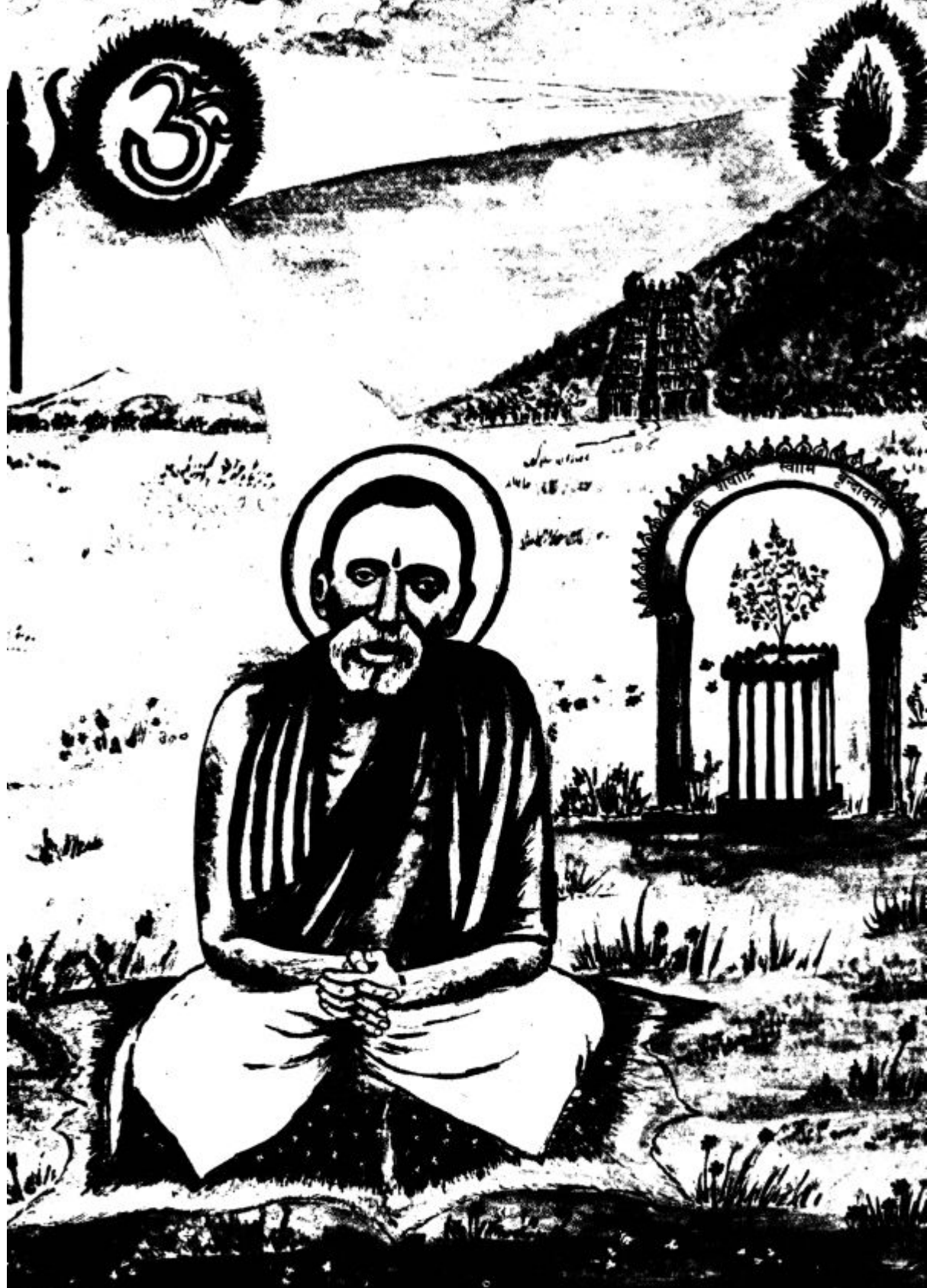




**HRI SESHADRI SWAMIGAL
MAHATMYAM**

Dedicated

to

SATHGURU SHRI SESHADRI SWAMIGAL

at whose feet life blossoms
like a lotus of countless petals.

**SHRI SESHADRI SWAMIGAL
MAHATMYAM**

by
INDHU

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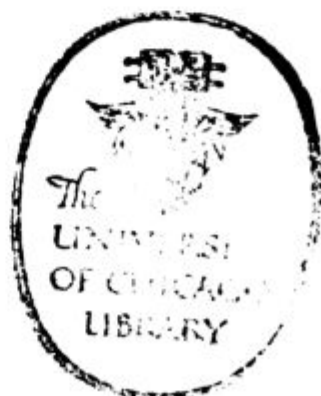
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PREFACE

Mahans as Gurus, representing all powers sublime, in the form of the light supreme, take men along the divine path. To write the biography of Saints is not easy; to write the biography of Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal a Himalayan task; doubtless a sacred one. The deep desire to give to the world the hitherto abstruse life story of the Sathguru has long been in my heart. After deep thought and earnest prayer I asked Gurunathar about it. I got no instructions.

Five months back a girl came to my office. She said that she had been to the temple of Shirdi Sai Baba in Mylapore, Madras and having heard excellent reports about me from the temple authorities had come to have her horoscope scrutinized. Having been strenuously trained to accept what ever life brought as a gift from the Sathguru, praise or blame were accorded the same place to my mind. I studied her horoscope thoroughly. I was also impressed by her command over the English language. If Gurunathar's biography was to be given to the world, then in what better language than English. Only then could people from our country, as well as from the world over, read about his glory. From the light of the Sathguru within, which is the guiding force in my life came the instruction that this girl be asked to write his biography. My hair stood on end, my heart brimmed with joy. Gurunathar had shown the way. I was greatly relieved that the world would now have before it the life story of Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal.

That girl is the author of this biography Ms. Indhu. When there are several writers, professors holding doctorates in literature, what was so special about this girl that she was chosen for this task. Her horoscope shows the second house the house of Guru or Jupiter occupied by the planet Mercury in conjunction with the Planet Ketu. Jupiter in the fifth house aspects the Ninth and Eleventh houses as well as the ascen-

dant. This indicates the complete blessings of the Guru giving her the jnana required to write on spiritual matters. I would also like to mention another point at this juncture. I researched Guru Nathar's life using the Kanda Nadi Vakyam. This explains how Gurunathar in his previous birth as Abirami Battar in Thirukadayoor near Myladuthurai caused the full moon to shine on a new moon night, thus changing the time of the month. If Gurunathar beats another it is a blessing, if he scolds then that is compassion, if he spits there knowledge abounds, that spittle the nectar which cures many a disease. All this because he is the incarnation of the Goddess said the Nadi. To remove the darkness of the new moon Gurunathar as Abirami Battar brought the light of the full moon. The sun though it gives great brightness is full of heat. Moon light on the other hand pleases and soothes the soul, is pleasant and healing to the agitated mind. To give to the world his life story, to dispel darkness from human minds using words as soothing as moonlight, to write his biography it would be very apt to say that Gurunathar selected this girl with the name meaning moon, Indhu.

Indhu has strung together beautifully, like several precious gems on a priceless chain, the glorious incidents of the divine life of Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal. I offer my thanks to her on behalf of the trust.

Thanks also to Thirumathi Priya who helped the successful publication of this biography by designing the wrapper. "Priyam" means affectionate. Gurunathar having selected her to draw the cover picture indicates that Priya has come close to him.

To all friends who helped and worked hard to release this publication, to the printers and to the parents of Indhu my sincere gratitude. In whosoever house this book will be, there blessings will abound. Like the Sreemad Bhagavatam and Sree Ramayanam this is a divine treasure to be respected and preserved. With the prayer that each one of you will

buy and read this book, not once but several times, thus becoming recipients of the Sathguru's blessings, I dedicate this book at the lotus feet of Shri Seshadri Swamigal.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti

Mr. K.V.L.N. SHARMA,
CHAIRMAN
SATHGURU SHRI SESHADRI SWAMIGAL
BRINDAVANAM TRUST

INTRODUCTION

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।

गुरुःसाक्षात् परंब्रह्म तस्मै श्रीगुरुवे नमः ॥

Guru Brahma Gururvishnu

Gururdevo Maheswaraha

Guru Sakshat Param Brahma

Tasmai Shri Guravae Namaha.

Shri Seshadri Swamigal Mahatmyam, is the biography of Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal. It tells the story of a soul ever in communion with the Godhead; the glory of its self-realization. It is a story that has no end.

The book attempts to portray a sublime life. It also tries to highlight the boundless love and compassion Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal has for his disciples to whom he is as alive today as he was while still in the physical body. In a world steeped in cynicism and confusion, the spiritual plane of existence is not easily accepted or understood. Nor is the role of a Sathguru in helping man through these testing times fully appreciated. This lack of clarity however can hardly dilute that truth which great souls have known and realized. To his disciples this revered Saint remains to the day a living reality. Many are the souls he has touched, innumerable the lives he has transformed.

The narrative explores areas which have hitherto remained untouched. Great care has been taken to maintain absolute authenticity and objectivity. Facts presented have been based on painstaking research, interviews and have in cases where pertinent been verified with already existing publications. All that needs to be added, is that the experiences mentioned in the work and the living presence of Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal can be realized by anyone who has the requisite faith and sincere devotion. Where

his name is taken with fervour there he is present. And peace and blessings must there then necessarily abound.

Thanks are also in order to Mr. Lakshmi Narayana Sharma, alias K.V.L.N. Sharma, astrologer Guru Computer Jothidam, Chairman Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal Brindavanam Trust and ardent disciple of the Sathguru. Without his constant support and guidance the publication of this biography would not have been possible. Through Mr. Sharma and using astrology as a tool the Sathguru communicates with the world to this day helping to bring peace to the most turbulent lives. Indeed Mr. Sharma is one who with exemplary devotion has placed his entire life at the feet of his Guru. It is only right to say that he has been the inspiration behind this work.

Before I conclude may I add that this task of writing the biography of, Seshadri Swamigal came upon me unexpectedly. To one to whom even the above name was relatively new, this was a Herculean task. Though the conviction to do it came spontaneously, there was a certain apprehension considering the serious nature of the subject on hand. I prayed then in all earnestness to Seshadri Swamigal that he guide me, that he tell me more about himself and then put pen to paper. From then on till the day the last word was penned, information poured in, people talked about their experiences, new aspects came to light, help was forthcoming in a hundred different ways, all put together in the form of this book. It would be only right to say that writing this biography of the Sathguru has been by far the most satisfying endeavour of my life, a wholly enlightening experience. Knowing Shri Seshadri Swamigal was the coming alive of all the Gods I had ever worshipped. It must, however, also be said that this was a period of severe tests, a baptism by fire. My prayer that I know him better did not go unanswered; the Sathguru time and again revealed, the exacting standard that he has set for his disciples, specially the ones



Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal

who yearn for greater realization. In those excruciating moments of trial, I would often feel too drained to continue. Yet by the Sathguru's grace any height can be reached, any peak conquered. Page by page the biography was completed; an effort made to convey to the world the mystical truth that Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal symbolized. Without his blessing this book would never have taken shape. To Him, my Guru, whose light pervades my life, I dedicate this book in silent supplication.

May Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal shower his blessings on all fellow travellers on the path of life.

- Author



Chapter No. 1

A SACRED BIRTH

The Sun was yet to rise that morning on the 22nd of January 1870. There was an air of expectancy in the house of Shri Kamakoti Sastrigal in Kanchipuram. The family, one of an ancient lineage of devout Shri Vidya Upasakars was eagerly awaiting the birth of a child.

Kanchipuram is a temple town of South India, some eighty Kms, south of Madras. The place has retained its spiritual glory through the years, remaining an important area of Hindu pilgrimage to this day. Several shrines of importance both Shaivite and Vaishnavite are situated here, the most famous, being the shrine dedicated to the Goddess Kamakshi.

Jagadguru Adi Sankaracharya visited Kanchipuram during his extensive travels and decided to make it a major centre of Shri Vidya worship. The Shri Vidya cult established by Adi Shankara as the best means of conveying the doctrines of Advaita, is an elaborate form of worship of the Goddess Tripurasundari following rigid rites and rituals. A Shri Vidya Upasakar is required to maintain a disciplined attitude to life to sustain the power generated by these austerities. Feeling the dearth of suitable persons to continue the practise in Kanchipuram, Adi Sankara brought to this town, families of Devi Bakthas from the banks of the Narmada, to propogate, the Shri Vidya cult. This lineage took the name of 'Kamakoti Vamsa' the said worship continuing untarnished to this day. These families later on also took to astrology, perfecting themselves in the art.

Kamakoti Sastrigal spent his life at Vazhur, a suburb of Kanchipuram, worshipping the Goddess Kamakshi as the Shri Vidya Swarupam'. Born under the Kaundinya Gothram, this learned and righteous scholar was blessed with one

daughter, Seshammal. He had no sons. His elder brother Chidambara Sastri had four children, two boys and two girls all of whom he looked upon as his own. Most of all the youngest girl Maragathammal, who was so beautiful and intelligent, that people considered her to be almost divinity incarnate. The girl at a very early age was well versed in various subjects including art and culture. She was also blessed with a melodious voice and a gift for rendering bakthi kirtans with captivating effect.

Of the thirty families originally brought to Kanchipuram by Adi Sankara, only two remained. Varadarajar a disciple of Kamakoti Sastri also belonged to the 'Kamakoti Vamsa'. Endowed with Shri Vidya Siddhi, well read and good looking, Varadarajar was considered an ideal match for beautiful Maragathammal.

With the consent of Seshadri Joshiyar, astrologer par excellence and father of Varadarajar, the marriage between the two was fixed. Solemnised over seven long days the wedding ceremony was a grand occasion. All of Kanchipuram rejoiced over the union of an ideal couple in holy matrimony and participated with enthusiasm in the celebrations.

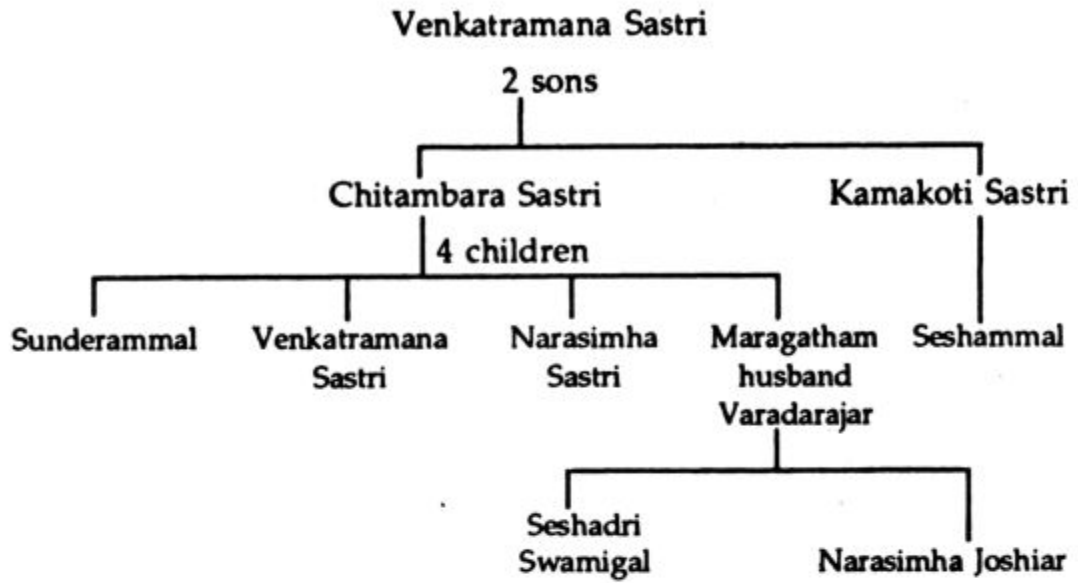
Maragathammal and Varadarajar settled down to a happy life immersed in their devotion to God and to each other. Yet as the years passed there was a vacuum in their lives, one flaw in their happiness. They had no children. Sincere prayers and ardent worship failed to yield results as the couple remained childless. Varadarajar was an unhappy man. Why was this happening, he asked himself. Was his family to die out without an heir? Maragathammal and Varadarajar spent themselves invoking God's blessing asking for divine grace. They undertook strenuous fasts. They journeyed to Rameswaram, a sacred place of Hindu pilgrimage hoping that the Lord Ramanathaswamy and the Goddess Paravathambal would answer their prayers. Then began severe austerities, 'Mangala Shasti Vratam', 'Mangala

Kumara Vratam', the penance continued. The agony of the young couple through those trying years was inexplicable. It needed to be experienced to be understood. Blessed in every way, exemplary in their way of life, an ideal to every one yet their minds wracked by the grief of not having a child they could love and cherish. Were the gods not watching? Was there to be no mercy at all ?

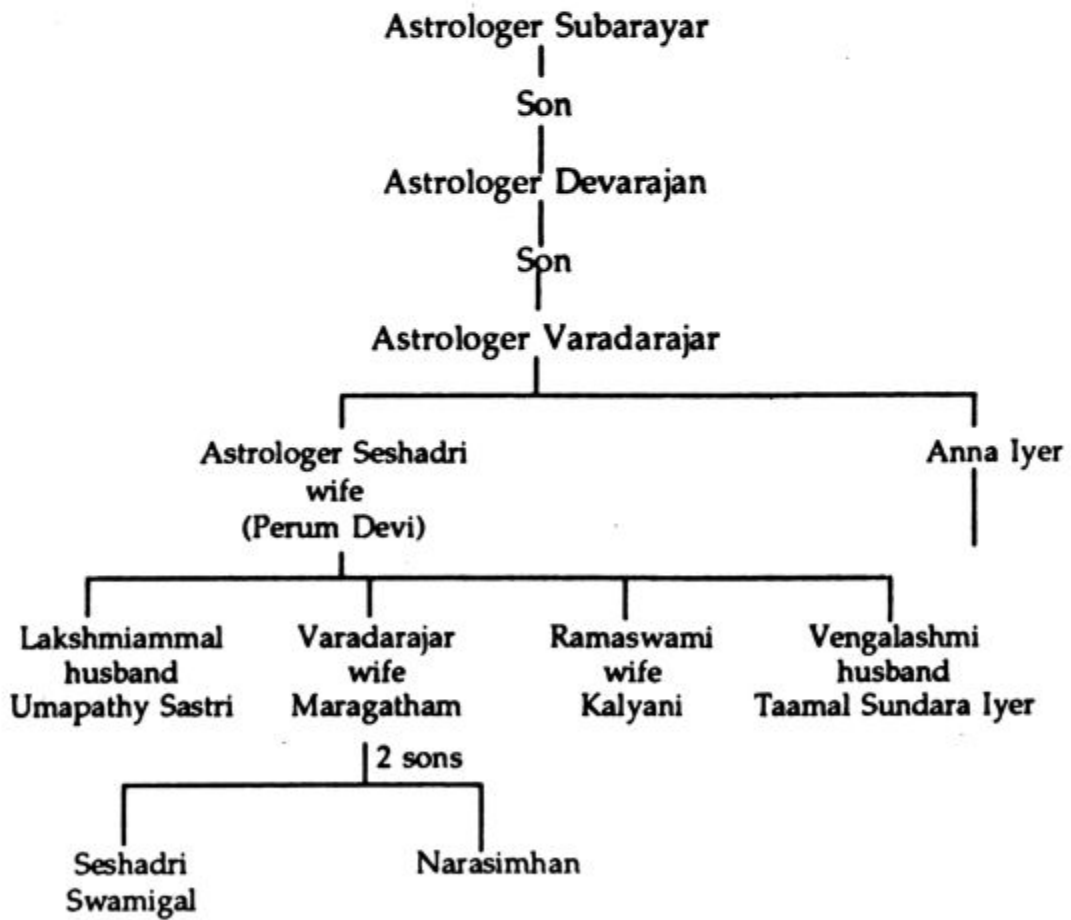
While Maragathammal and Varadarajar tried to deal with the turbulent emotions that shook their minds, Kamakoti Sastrigal could take it no more. He could not bear to see these young people so beloved to him suffer such mental anguish. He had but one solution. He turned to Goddess Kamakshi at whose feet he had long laid his life. Would Mother not right this wrong, would she not answer his prayers, would she not bless the family with a child ? Kamakoti Sastrigal beseeched Goddess Kamakshi repeatedly and earnestly, entreating the Mother to put an end to this turmoil, to grant Margathammal and Varadarajar the child they so desperately desired. The cries rang out from the depths of his heart, as the pious old scholar prayed with complete devotion, sure that Shakti who was his life would answer his prayers.

Even the Gods it seemed could take it no more. The Goddess alive to the needs of her true devotees, in answer to the sincere prayer of a pure family appeared to Kamakoti Sastrigal in a dream saying - "Navaneetham Kodu, Jnana Kalai Udikkum", "Offer butter to me and then give it to Maragathammal, a divine light will rise". Kamakoti Sastrigal's joy knew no bounds. With complete faith he strictly set about following the divine instructions. Preparing cow's butter with great care he prayed fervently, offering the butter to the Goddess. Then he proceeded to give it to Maragathammal. In due course Maragathammal conceived and the family bowed their heads in reverence to the Goddess.

MOTHER'S FAMILY TREE



FATHER'S FAMILY TREE





Shri Seshadri Swamigal was Born here

And thus it was that on the morning of the 22nd of January 1870, the 11th day of the Tamil month of Thai, in the Hindu year called Sukla Varsham, Maragathammal gave birth to a radiant baby boy. The asterism was fourth padam of uttram by the Thirukanitham almanac. According to the vaakyam almanac the asterism was Hasta. The day a Saturday and Krishna Paksha Shasti, auspicious to Hindus. There could be no defining the happiness that pervaded the house that day; to Maragathammal and Varadarajar the baby was a boon from heaven, to Kamakoti Sastrigal the gift of his omni present Kamakshi. A long standing need had been fulfilled every hardship under-gone more than worth it. The baby himself was beautiful and seemed to reflect the radiance of Mother Shakti. Indeed the struggle that preceeded the conception of the child and the extent of prayer and penance that resulted in his birth were indications of the glory of the life just begun. For it was no ordinary child that was born. This was God's gift to mankind, a soul born to play the role of guide and preceptor to people over the world.

Born on Saturday the day of Lord Shrinivasa Perumal or Seshadri natha who was the family deity, the baby boy was christened Seshadri. Seshadri a name that continues to be synonymous with realization; a name uttered with faith and devotion in several homes. And so a divine life began.



The Krishna Idol worshiped by Seshadri Swamigal

Chapter No. 2

GLIMPSES OF A DIVINE FUTURE

Young Seshadri was a great favourite with every one. His charming presence and joyful ways captivated all those who came across him. A smile that could melt the hardest heart, crystal clear laughter that could win anyone over; in short a joy to behold. Seshadri's first birthday was marked by a month long celebration, joined in by one and all.

Seshadri grew up engaging himself in childhood pursuits, running after calves and accepting fruit from his admirers. As Lord Krishna enchanted Gokul so Seshadri enraptured the people of Kanchipuram. Maragathammal and Varadarajar took great pride in watching the baby boy grow up. As for Kamakoti Sastrigal, little Seshadri was the apple of his eye.

By the early age of four Seshadri began exhibiting exemplary devotion. He started joining his parents in worship, offering flowers to God during prayer. Even at that early age, the small boy would stand beside his parents during pooja, praying with closed eyes and folded hands. Soon he started meditating along with his father. He would recite without mistakes slokas like the Guru stuthi, Mushika Vahanam, Rama Stotram and Krishna Ashtakam. Seshadri prayed with a fervour remarkable in one so young. Absorbed in prayer nothing would distract him. Even at that age there was a certain calm about him, a peaceful nature undisturbed by childish tantrums.

It must here be remembered that the little boy Seshadri was to be a yogi of supreme realization. The soul within the young body was an old one, one that had taken human form to act as a light unto man. Though the growing years had to bring with it the normal share of playfulness, here was a life for a different purpose. This sacredness had necessarily

to manifest itself from the early beginnings. The solemn mission behind this birth had to chart the course this life was to take. The frivolities of childhood were limited. From very early on, spirituality began to take precedence over all other aspects.

A glorious future was time and again indicated for the baby born of divine grace. Maragathammal would visit the temple of Lord Varadaraja Perumal every day taking her four year old son with her. It was the occasion of the Vaishaka Utsava at the temple. The streets were lined with shops displaying dolls for sale. Seshadri during one of his routine visits to the temple along with his mother, ran up to a shop and picked up an idol of Lord Krishna. The idol was a small one, a baby Krishna, who seemed to be crawling forward, butter gripped in one hand. Seshadri insisted that he wanted to keep it saying that he desired to worship it. The shopkeeper pleased to see such devotion in one so young gave the idol to the boy refusing to accept any payment for it. Seshadri returned home joyfully with his Krishna. The next day as Maragathammal and Seshadri along with some family members were making their way past the same shop, the shopkeeper ran out and prostrating before mother and child kissed Seshadri's hands with tears streaming from his eyes. It was a miracle he said; the child divine. He had gifted one idol to Seshadri. Then he had during the day sold a 1000 such idols when normally it would have been difficult to sell even two to three hundred through the entire festival. The child has golden hands, "Thangakai" and was indeed blessed. Seshadri was from then on the object of even greater adulation.

And so it was that the divinity which marked the life of the great Saint started becoming apparent from a very young age. After 'Vidyabyasam' or the formal ritualistic start of the learning process at the age of five, Seshadri attended classes at the temple Vedic School. He also studied scriptures

at the 'Sastra Patashala' and the 'Sadagopa Patashala'. Here again the extraordinary brilliance of the child astounded one and all. Divinely blessed as he was, a jewel of the Goddess Kamakshi, knowledge came easily to Seshadri. The family basked in the glory of the boy, those were days of immense happiness. Even through the days when studious Seshadri was hard at work on the scriptures, his mind was often absorbed in prayer. He began from very early on to pray with a selflessness that was to say the least extraordinary. Only natural because as later events were to prove, his was a soul constantly in communion with God.

There was however to now be an event in Seshadri's life which exposed him to the ravages of sorrow, the death of his father Varadarajar. One day when the boy went to take his father's blessings, Varadarajar broke down and cried. When an anxious Seshadri enquired of his father the reason for the sudden sorrow, Varadarajar simply said that what was ordained would necessarily happen. Soon after, Varadarajar's brother Ramaswami adopted Narasimhan the younger brother of Seshadri. Varadarajar then explained that the time had come for him to be eternally merged with God. He would soon leave his earthly home to return to the source of all life. Varadarajar tried to console his grief-stricken wife Maragathammal telling her that she needed to stay with Seshadri who had a glorious future ahead.

On a 'Pradosam' day Varadarajar as usual visited the Ekambaraswarar temple dedicated to Lord Shiva and his consort, Kamakshi. He was fasting that day. Varadarajar returned home, had some water and reclining to rest, serenely departed from the physical world.

Varadarajar's death left Maragathammal and Seshadri totally devastated. Seshadri wanted to give up worldly bondage. KamakotiSastrigal seeing this grief, brought mother and son to Vazhur. Seshadri was then 14. KamakotiSastrigal sorrowful as he was at Varadarajar's passing away tried to

control his grief in order to help Maragatham and Seshadri through their hour of trial. He initiated Seshadri with the 'Mantra Sastra Rahasyam' according to the Agastyar tradition. One year's work at studying the Vedanta Sastra and Seshadri was well versed in it. It was at this time that Kamakoti Sastrigal was invited to Vandavasi to conduct an Upanyas on the Ramayanam and the Bhagavatham. Feeling the effects of old age Kamakoti Sastrigal offered that Seshadri take his place. This was totally acceptable to all and so Kamakoti Sastrigal proceeded to Vandavasi along with Maragatham and Seshadri. There for a whole year Seshadri conducted discourses on the Bhagavatham and Ramayanam with great aplomb. It was clear that fifteen year old, Seshadri was an exceptional scholar and had every hall mark of untold greatness.

Kamakoti Sastrigal was now nearing his end. He was feeling more and more unwell. Knowing that his days were numbered this devout scholar returned to Kanchipuram and desired to take 'Abat Sannyas'. His guru was Krishnananda Swami. After formally taking 'Abat Sannyas', that is deciding to spend his last days as a sannyasi away from all, Kamakoti Sastrigal took the name of Brahmananda Saraswathi. He spent the next three months living as one who renounced the world, in the shrine of Sakrathazvar. There Maragatham and Seshadri would visit him every day taking with them food and water. It was a poignant sight, the aged Kamakoti Sastrigal his mind one with God, ready to depart from the world, lovingly taken care of by his daughter and young grandson both feeling for the second time in a short span the pain of separation from a near and dear one.

Parusuram Sastri then decided to take the weak and ailing scholar to Taamal, which he did. There Kamakoti Sastrigal passed into eternity leaving Maragatham and Seshadri to mourn the departed soul. Till today his Samadhi

can be found on the banks of the Sarpa Nadi in Taamal. To both Maragathammal and her son the passing away of Kamakoti Sastrigal meant the end of the most positive influence on their lives. This teacher of astute wisdom and impeccable character had helped mould both lives with the same care with which a potter would shape his creations. Both had much to thank him for; it was an irreparable loss.

There was to be no respite however for Maragathammal. Seshadri's aunt Vengalakshmi from Taamal village had a daughter Kahini Devi also called Kagammal. Vengalakshmi desired that Seshadri marry Kagammal and came to Kanchipuram to discuss the matter with Maragathammal. Ramaswami Joshiyar then broke the news to the family. Seshadri's horoscope was clearly that of a yogi, a life which did not include marriage. He was earmarked to be a Sannyasi and that would not change. Everyone was shocked but of what avail. Vengalakshmi returned home and soon Kagammal was given away in marriage to another. Maragathammal already consumed by sorrow after the death of her husband and father, was now entirely overwhelmed. She could take the pain no more.

One 'Ekadasi' day Maragathammal called Seshadri to her and asked him to sing some bajans composed by Kamakoti Sastrigal. Then embracing Seshadri she recited the famous verse from Baja Govindam written by Adi Sankara.

सत्संगत्वे निस्संगत्वं
निस्संगत्वे निर्मोहत्वम् ।
निर्मोहत्वे निश्चलत्वं
निश्चलत्वे जीवन्मुक्तिः ॥१॥

*Sat sang atwae, nissang atwam,
nis sang atwae, nir moh atwam,
nir mor atwae, nischala tatvam,
nischala tatwae, jeevan muktihi.*

Good association breeds detachment;
Detachment leads to freedom from
delusion;
Undeluded one contacts changeless
Reality;
Contact with Reality bestows Liberation-
while-alive.
Then,

दर्शनात् अभ्रसदसि जननात् कमलालये ।
काश्यां तु मरणान्मुक्तिः स्मरणादरुणाचले ॥

*Darshanata prasadasi,
Jananat Kamalalayae,
Kashyantu maranaumukthi
Smaranat Arunachale*

Mukthi by
Worship at Chidambaram
Birth at Tiruvarur
Death at Kasi,
Mere thought of Arunachala,

Crying out Arunachala thrice, the pious lady passed
out of bodily bondage into eternity leaving her divine child
Seshadri to begin a new phase of his holy life.

Chapter No. 3

THE LIGHT BLAZES FORTH

Maragathammal's passing away lit a fire of dispassion in Seshadri. All the strongest bonds which shackled him to earthly existence had snapped. Aflame with 'vairagya' Seshadri flung himself body, mind and soul into a search of those impenetrable depths of the human soul which alone could give permanent peace and meaning to life. Indeed his mother's dying reference to Arunachala had captured his imagination to such an extent that drawing a picture of the place as it came to mind Seshadri began to worship it. Strange as it may seem though he had never visited the area Seshadri had drawn a thoroughly accurate picture of Tiruvannamalai the place where he was to spend the better part of his life. But that was to come later.

Young Seshadri, who now lived with his uncle Ramaswamy and aunt Kalyani was to enter a phase of earnest worship and rigorous Sadhana. The day began early with the recitation of the Durga Stuthi or Mantras taught by Kamakoti Sastrigal. Prayers before the pictures of Goddess Kamakshi, Lord Rama and the sketch that he had made of Tiruvannamalai would continue till noon. Sometimes he would mediate at the Sakrathazvar Sannadhi. After two he would be seen at the Kamakshi temple reciting the Mukapancha Sathi in praise of the Goddess without break. He would strictly perform Sandhya Vandanam every day and recite the Gayatri. His already sound knowledge of the Vedas was strengthened by rigorous Japa and meditation. His personal appearance these days was a picture of neglect, he rarely shaved, seldom used oil. He paid scant respect to the needs of his body often going without food and water for long periods. Food from the temple he would occasionally eat, often sharing it with animals. The family, worried

about his health, repeatedly entreated Seshadri to relax these austerities, the pleas fell on deaf ears.

During these days Seshadri was known to exhibit rather strange behaviour. He would look skywards, worship the sun, take the blessing of Brahmins or fall at the feet of women addressing them as mother. He could often be heard speaking in Sanskrit or debating with other scholars. He had taken to wearing kumkum on his forehead, a mark of his severe penance, It was not uncommon those days to see Seshadri wander along the roads talking it would seem to himself. No house was his own, he could make any home his. The house of one Mr. Shrinivasa Iyer, Seshadri regarded as his own. He would often visit there, playing with the children with whom he was a great favourite. His family distraught by his erratic behaviour locked him up once for three days. Seshadri sat within and calmly meditated refusing food until the family fearing for his health let him out.

People began to say that Seshadri was crazy about jnana, hence this continuous japa.

कामो कर्षीत काम करोति नाह करोमि ।

Kamo karisheath, manyura karisheath Namō Nama:

Seshadri would say. The Karomi Veda Mantra rid man of his Karma. He had repeated it one lakh times another half a lakh to go. He advised one and all to repeat it as it would be beneficial to them. Unfortunately people can seldom appreciate the greatness of a soul in its early years. The glory of later years often comes at the cost of great struggle in the beginning. Harassed by people and unable to continue his meditation undisturbed, Seshadri took to meditating in the burial ground. Shocking enough as this was to the orthodoxy Seshadri chose a burial ground belonging to the lowest caste of people to continue his 'sadhana' in. Utterly unpardonable to the vast majority. Seshadri was

again forcibly brought home and locked up. There the young Saint stayed, meditating in complete tranquility with total disregard for food or water. The family was left with no choice but to let him out. There was a new lustre on his face, a new light was beginning to shine. No one now dared to criticize him.

One day Seshadri returned home to find his uncle thoroughly critical of his behaviour. Polite though Seshadri was to all, he brooked no interference in his life. He explained to his agitated uncle Ramaswamy that each was to be left to his own ways, the ways of one were not for another. Even as the conversation was in progress Seshadri rushed out. He soon returned to explain, ghandarvas were flying past singing. Common people their eyes blinded by Karma could not see divine sights. So saying he nonchalantly went about his own devices.

Clear indications though there were that Seshadri was a great soul, his relatives were not prepared to accept such eccentric behaviour as yet. A marriage they felt would rectify the young man. Ramaswamy in particular thought very deeply about this feeling that he might have been responsible for the lad taking such a path. After all was it not his declaration that put an end to marriage plans for Seshadri. But who would marry this strange young man. When Seshadri came to know of his uncle's efforts he firmly squashed all such ideas politely saying that Ramaswamy had done him a favour in the first place. If he heard any further talk of marriage he would leave the place forever. His path in life was charted out, there could be no deviation. The family was silenced forever.

Young Seshadri was a man of clear vision and resolute temperament. His penance in the burial ground continued. Parasuram Sastri from Taamal tried to dissuade him. There then followed an argument of three long hours during which Seshadri elucidated that he was a Nyshtika Brahmachari and

so was allowed to do Rudra Bhoomi japa. If he was not to come home however, he would, there after, live beneath the trees, which he then set about doing for the next six to seven months unconcerned that there was no roof above his head.

There was to now occur an incident that was of vital importance to Seshadri's life-his meeting with Balaji Swami. Seshadri, along with an acquaintance, made his way one day to the nearby temple of Lord Viswanath. There among the Saints seated inside, was one of such striking presence and brilliance of countenance that to Seshadri it seemed that the Lord Dakshinamoorthy, Guru to the universe had come alive. The Saint with captivating presence, was Balaji Swami from Haridwar on pilgrimage to Rameswaram. He had stopped over in Kanchipuram to worship the Goddess Kamakshi. Even as Seshadri watched enraptured Balaji Swami's eyes seemed to pierce Seshadri's soul. Seshadri had found his Guru.

During the days that followed Seshadri exhausted himself in the service of his Guru. He would spend hours massaging Balaji Swami's hands and legs and fanning him. He would feed the Swami lovingly with milk and fruit ready to do anything that would please his Guru. The two would spend hours in conversation discussing the scriptures and analysing in depth several spiritual topics. For Seshadri this was a phase of life that was very valuable; it was the period which saw the transformation of Seshadri, a spiritually inclined young man into a Saint of untold realization. Guru bakthi and Guru seva are both accorded the highest place in the Hindu religion, even higher than the worship of God. Natural then that young Seshadri threw himself into the service of his Guru, Balaji Swami, without a thought for anything else. His Guru's wish was his command. No desire was too trivial, no task too difficult; the happiness Seshadri derived from this selfless activity, immense.

Now was to come that moment of truth in Seshadri's life; initiation into sannyas. Pleased with his young disciple's devotion Balaji Swami initiated him into a life of renunciation and austerity the ways of a Sannyasi. Balaji Swami later left for Rameswaram. A new door now opened in Seshadri's life; the door to untold spiritual freedom. For the soul which had thirsted deeply for this liberation its moment of inexorable joy had come, a need born from the very depths of his soul had been fulfilled. Seshadri who later gave up his Kamandalam and dandam in the traditions of a "Jeevan Muktha" was now to enjoy greater bakthi and vairagya. Constant equanimity and tranquility became a part of him. The young saint wandered through Kanchipuram, a liberated soul one with God, a picture of intense devotion and compassion.

As Seshadri wandered lost in self realization the day of his father's death ceremony approached. His family especially his aunt was unhappy that Seshadri should live a life away from all. To them he was still their little boy Seshadri. They were unaware that here was a young Saint of tremendous realization and remarkable calibre. It was decided that Seshadri should participate in the death ceremonies of his father. Efforts were made to bring him to the house. Seshadri refused to comply saying that he was a Sannyasi and hence had no Karma. Despite his protests he was taken home and as before locked up in a room. His brother Narasimha began the Homa. When it was time for Seshadri to join the proceedings, his uncle went to bring him. He unlocked the door to the room and waited for Seshadri to come out. There was no one in the room. Ramaswamy could not believe his eyes. Nor could the stream of people who came in to check if the young man could be found. It was then that the extent of Seshadri's greatness dawned upon his relatives and friends. He had by the power of his realization come out of a room that had been securely locked

and bolted. He was to be restrained no longer. There were no doors this soul could not unlock; nothing could bind him anymore; here was a soul that transcended all boundaries. Young Seshadri had become the epitome of Shakti, a Yogi of unsurpassed enlightenment-Seshadri Swami.

Chapter No. 4

JOURNEY TO TIRUVANNAMALAI

Now began Seshadri Swami's journey to Tiruvannamalai, a journey that was to take him through several areas of South India. After leaving Kanchipuram Seshadri Swami reached Cauverypakkam the home town of his aunt Sunderambal. There he stayed at the temple of Lord Mukeswara, sometimes with his ten year old cousin Seshayar. One day as the two were circumambulating the temple a snake suddenly appeared from the nearby wall. Seshayar screamed in fright. Seshadri Swami unperturbed called the snake to him and let it climb up his head. It circled around the Swami's neck thrice and spread its hood over the Saint's head. Seshayar petrified, ran away crying that Swami had been bitten by a snake. People gathered only to see a godly sight, the huge snake encircling the Saint's neck fanning his head with its hood, the Swami himself a picture of serenity. To the crowd it seemed that the Lord Mukeswarar had appeared before them. After a while the snake slithered down and went away leaving everyone unharmed.

Seshadri Swami lapsed into a state of deep meditation and was soon so absorbed in it that he seemed to entirely forget his body. People flocked to have darshan of this blessed soul. His family came too in the hope that he might return with them. Only to be disappointed, the Swami opened his eyes. His relatives apologised profusely pleading with him to return home with them. Seshadri Swami gently waved them away, he could not go with them.

For two and a half months here after there are no records of the Swami's whereabouts. He was next traced in Tindivanam. Those days Seshadri Swami was observing silence and would speak to no one. He conveyed through gestures the need to meditate in solitude. Accordingly one

Mr. Kannayar made available to him a room in a temple. Entering the place, Seshadri Swami asked that the door he bolted to be opened only a month later. Four days passed when a certain fear crept into Kannayar's mind. How could the Saint survive for a month without food or water. What if he were to die ?. Would not the financial burden of cleansing and purifying the temple fall on him. Consumed by anxiety Kannayar rushed to open the door only to find Seshadri Swami in rapt meditation. Kannayar then requested that he continue his penance else where. Seshadri Swami indicated that he was going to Tiruvannamalai and left.

Two months lapsed before, Seshadri Swami was re-traced now in a cave in Toosi, 5 Kilometers from Kanchipuram. People rushed to see him, his brother Narasimhan among them. He however could not meet the Swami. The Yogi soon left for Vellore via Wallajah. Travelling through Ambur and Vaniyampadi he reached Tiruppathur where he stayed in the Brahmeswarar temple for a few days.

From here on Seshadri Swami moved through remote areas until he reached Padaivedu. There he stayed at the Shrine of the Goddess Renuka. His journey now took him to Athwambadi, home town of his uncle Venkataramana Sastri. As Seshadri Swami made his way through this village, his uncle spotted him and called out to him. The Swami carrying on heedless of his uncle's cries, Venkataramana Sastri sent another in pursuit of the fast moving Saint. Seshadri Swami reached Kurinji Kupam settling down for the night in a shrine, where the man from Athwampadi catches up with him. Only to be sent back. Seshadri Swami was not stopping for any one he had a destination in mind. Indeed he set off again and now his journey culminated at Tiruvannamalai, the place he was to inhabit for 40 glorious years, a place he was never to leave again until his death.

On reaching Thiruvannamalai Seshadri Swami hurried to the temple of Lord Arunachalaswar and Goddess

Unnamalai. His joy knew no bounds as he became blissfully immersed in the worship of the Lord; to Seshadri Swami he had come home. Leaving Kanchipuram in 1889 Seshadri Swami reached Thiruvannamalai that very year traversing long distances. This was his home till his passing away in 1929 a region he sanctified by his holy presence.

Chapter No.5

GLORY OF ARUNACHALA

वरुणादिसुराचार्य तरुणादित्वयवर्चसे ।

अरुणाचलनाथाय करुणामूर्तये नमः ॥

*Varunadhisurarchya tharunadhityya varchase ।
Arunachala nathaya karuna murthayae Namaha ॥
Worshipped by all including Varuna,
Aglow like the rising sun,
The very picture of mercy
I pray to that Lord Arunachala*

No biography of Seshadri Swamigal can be complete without describing the glory of Tiruvannamalai. The place has always endeared itself to men of realization. From time immemorial sages have repeatedly felt the magnetic attraction of the mountain Arunachala. Symbolic of Lord Shiva in silent contemplation, Arunachala to saints like Ramana Maharishi was a manifestation of Dakshinamoorthy himself. Seshadri Swamigal came to Tiruvannamalai, never to leave the place. When asked in later years the reason for his fascination for Tiruvannamalai he said, "here the Lord Arunachaleswarar and goddess Unnamalai call you to them giving you Moksha; here Lord Venugopal entrances you with his music."

Hindu mythology tells the story of how Lord Vishnu and the creator Brahma got into an argument about who was superior. In a bid to resolve the issue they approached Lord Shiva. "Whoever sights either my head or feet first is the greatest, said the Lord. Eager to prove their superiority both set off; Brahma in the form of a swan flying upwards, Vishnu as Varaha burrowing downwards. That was when Brahma met the flower Thazhambu(scented aloe) falling from Shiva's

head. Tired of travelling the seemingly endless path Brahma makes a deal with the flower. "I will tell Shiva that I have reached the top of his head you second that", says Brahma to the flower. And so saying they approach the Lord with their story. Only to incur his wrath. The Lord of the universe enraged at the ploy to cheat him takes the form of a pillar of fire, one that has no end. The place where the Lord comes alive is Tiruvannamalai, the pillar of fire now the mountain Arunachala. The story further goes on to say that Brahma is cursed by the Lord, there would be no separate shrine for him on earth. For Vishnu as Venugopal a small shrine behind Arunachaleswarar where he can be seen to this day. The story is depicted as 'lingoth bhavar' a sculpture found behind most Shiva Shrines. Arunachala stands even today, a silent testimony to the Lord's glory beckoning to those souls searching for salvation. The Mountain has been known to take various forms through the various Yugas. The archeological survey report confirms that the mountain is made of igneous rock.

"Girivalam around this blessed mountain is equivalent to a thousand trips to Kailash", said Seshadri Swamigal. The practise of going around the hill, Girivalam, continues undisturbed. One can only describe this journey of 14 Kms. as an exhilarating experience not to be missed. The entire path is dotted with shrines, the main temple of Arunachaleswarar, the ashrams of Seshadri Swamigal and Ramana Maharishi. The smaller shrines of the nine lingas Indran, Agni, Yamen, Varunan, Vayu, Nirithi, Surya, Kubera and Isanan, then the Shrines of Vinayaka, Dakshinamoorthy, Krishna, Aniannamalai, Raja Rajeswari, Mariamma, Durga, Muruga and Hanuman. Nandikeswara the foremost devotee of Lord Shiva faces Arunachala in silent worship. There are temples dedicated to 'Isaki siddar', Durvasa and Manikavasagar. It is said that here in the serene atmosphere, in the shadows of sacred Arunachala, Manikavasagar wrote the 'Tiruvempavai'. "Iduku pillayaar" a little shrine with a



Sacred Tiruvannamalai

small passage and no idol. Those traversing the mountain path have to pass through this opening using one's ingenuity to get through. The process itself is meant to rejuvenate the tired body, indeed such a feeling can be experienced for oneself. Girivalam undertaken by most devotees in the wee hours of the morning does wonders for a soul tired by the strains of stressful life in a modern world. The pleasing perfume of wild flowers, the chatter of birds and animals and above all the towering presence of Arunachala makes Girivalam an unforgettable endeavour. The cool morning air around Arunachala is often pervaded by the pleasing fragrance of jasmine or thazambu, sometimes even vibuthi. Saints say that this indicates the presence of a siddhar in the vicinity travelling in his astral body known to mortals only by these subtle indications. They are all there around majestic Arunachala in sanctified Tiruvannamalai, the very thought of which scriptures say is enough to give one moksha or salvation. Performing Girivalam is said to rid one of Karma. The completion of the walk along this beautiful mountain path doubtless restores a light heartedness, a certain revitalisation of a tired mind.

There are said to be specific results for performing Girivalam on different days of the week. Done on Sunday Girivalam assures one of Lord Shiva's blessings, on Monday the comforts of life. Tuesday gives one moksha, Wednesday the qualities to live like 'devas'. Thursday is for enlightenment, Friday takes one to the feet of the Protector Vishnu and Saturday gives one the blessings of the nine grahas essential for a peaceful life. Special days like "Shiva rathri" and the Tamil New Year are considered excellent for worship, as also the entire Hindu month of Iypasi, coinciding with the period from the 15th of October/ to 15th November by the English Calendar. It is enough to say that Girivalam is a thoroughly satisfying and fulfilling experience.

Tiruvannamalai is famed for yet another reason, Karthikai Deepam. Parvathi, the story goes playfully closed the eyes of Lord Shiva one day. Only for a moment but the destruction wrought on earth was tremendous. In anger the Lord banished Parvathi to the earth away from him. Pleading for forgiveness, Parvathi entreated Lord Shiva to have mercy on her. The Lord relented asking her to do penance at Kanchipuram. There the Goddess worshipped a 'linga' made of sand asking to be one with Lord Shiva. Pleased with her 'tapas', the Lord appeared before her and asked her to go to Tiruvannamalai, where she continued her penance at Pavazha kundra malai. - On the full moon night during the Tamil Month Karthika, the Lord Arunachaleswarar symbolic of Jyothi or light, accepted his consort, taking the form of Ardhanareswarar thus giving her his left half. Parvathi even today is found to the left of Iswarar a phenomenon exclusive to Tiruvannamalai. "Karthikai Deepam" continues to be celebrated with great fervour, a lamp being lit atop the mountain Arunachala with the ghee made available by thousands of worshippers who throng the place.

Yet another story of the Lord of Tiruvannamalai shows his infinite compassion for his devotees. The ruler of the land Vallala Maharaja was known for his generosity. He was also known for his supreme devotion to Arunachaleswarar. Yet he had no children and felt very deeply about this. One evening Lord Shiva appeared before the king in the guise of Shivanadiyar disciple of Iswara. Vallala Maharaja was over-joyed and wanted to do everything possible to make so honoured a guest comfortable. Shivanadiyar, then expressed the desire that he would like the company of a girl for the night. Eager to obey the smallest wish of this respected visitor the king tried to make the necessary arrangements but in vain; no girl could be found. A visibly upset king was in despair wanting to please so great a personage yet unable to do so. Seeing the king's dilemma the queen offered to serve the guest. Stepping into

Shivanadiyar's chamber she bends to take his blessings only to see the Lord transforming himself, into a child. Arunachaleswarar appeared before the royal couple in the form of a child, in answer to their heart felt prayers. The king and queen were overjoyed. Blessing them, Lord Arunachaleswarar said that they would never feel the want of a child; he himself would be a child to them and would perform their last rites. So saying he disappeared. On the asterism of Maga in the Hindu month of Masi, celebrations are conducted to commemorate the day when the Lord performed the rites for his disciples.

The venerable Adi Sankara did not set foot in holy Tiruvannamalai for fear of treading on the sacred grave of some great Saint. So pure was the soil of Tiruvannamalai, so many the saintly souls who had lived and died here; the glory of this region cannot be adequately defined. It was to this Tiruvannamalai that Seshadri Swamigal came, snapped of wordly bondage, initiated into sannyas, a veritable beacon of God realization. It was his mother's dying reference to Arunachala that showed Seshadri Swamigal the road to Tiruvannamalai. He came here at the age of nineteen to sanctify the place with his presence for forty glorious years. There were places he was known to frequent, places, which still have a picture of the great Saint as a mark of respect to the days he spent there. The Shrine of Lord Muruga, the Kambathelayanar Sannadhi in the Arunachaleswarar temple, the temple of Goddess Durga on the mountain path. A silent tribute to the great soul who was a constant companion to the people of Tiruvannamalai. To him they would rush in their hour of need sure that a way would be found. He was the answer to their sorrows the cause of their joys. His blessing was their greatest treasure, his presence in their lives, a light beyond compare.

Even today one's heart goes out to this Saint of Tiruvannamalai so ready to answer a sincere prayer; to

brighten a listless soul. To repeat his own words, "Where I am worshipped with true devotion there I shall make my presence felt, to support the burdens of the heart even as a hook supports the weight hung upon it."

HOROSCOPE OF SATHGURU SRI SESHADRISWAMIGAL

DATE OF BIRTH : 22- 1-1870 SATURDAY
 PLACE : VAZUR
 SUNRISE/SUNSET: 6:30/17:52(LMT)
 NAKSHATRA : UTTARA 4 PADA
 NIRAYANA LONGITUDES:

TIME : 5: 4 HRS(IST)
 AYANAMSA : 22: 2:23
 SID.TIME : 12:57:30
 THITHI : (KRISHNA) PANCHAMI

PLANET	DEG:MIN	STAR	PADA	RULER	PLANET	DEG:MIN	STAR	PADA	RULER
SURY	279:46	UTRASADA	4	SURY	SUKR	318:16	SATABISA	4	RAHU
CHAN	157:15	UTTARA	4	SURY	SANI	242:15	MOOLA	1	KETU
KUJA	290:41	SHRAVANA	4	CHAN	RAHU	96:13	PUSHYAMI	1	SANI
BUDH	297:44	DHANISTA	2	KUJA	KETU	276:13	UTRASADA	3	SURY
GURU	19:26	BHARANI	2	SUKR	LAGN	256: 1	PURVSADA	1	SUKR

	GUR		
SUK		RAH	
		R A S I	
BUD			
SUR KET			
KUJ			
SAN		CHA	
LAG			

SUK			
SUR	SAN		
CHA			
KET			KUJ
		NAVAMSA	
			RAH
			LAG
			BUD
			GUR

VIMSOTTARI DASAS: SURY DASA REMAINING AT BIRTH: 1 YRS 2 MONTHS 25 DAYS

Chapter No.6

THE SECRET OF A GLORIOUS BIRTH

Before we proceed in depth into Seshadri Swamigal's days at Thiruvannamalai, a look into certain other aspects of his life story is necessary. What for example was the secret behind this birth, this life as a Saint whose grace touched many a soul. The story of one so full of divine realization, one who lights the way for those burdened by the travails of day to day existence.

Astrology like spirituality, philosophy or religion is often the cause of heated debate. The ancients laid much stress on what the stars or rather the planets fortold. Good and bad tidings were determined by mathematical calculations of planetary positions, as did the course a life was to take. Accuracy of prediction depended then, as it does today on the erudition and divine grace that the astrologer acquired.

A brief analysis of Seshadri Swamigal's horoscope therefore becomes relevant in the context of this biography. It has already been stated that the planetary positions governing the Swamigal's life conveyed quite clearly that he would doubtless be a Yogi. The presence of four planets in one house with one exalted indicated 'Parivraja Yogam' resulting in Sannyas. The exaltation of Mars, the presence of the planet Ketu, in the Second house from the ascendant, aspecting the eighth house, with Rahu in the eighth house, meant the profound blessings of the Mother goddess, Shakti. Another aspect of interest was the planet Guru or Jupiter in the fifth house clearly describing a previous life of sanctity.

A deeper analysis was done using the Kanda Vakya Nadi. Nadi astrology uses leaves written on by the rishis

of yore detailing the lives of men. A 'jeeva nadi' remains a means by which the rishis communicate with man. A 'jeeva nadi' if accurately obtained gives a remarkably clear picture of hitherto abstruse parts of human lives. Unbelievable yet true, its authenticity having been proven in many a case. One such nadi, the Kanda Vakya Nadi, inscribed by the sage Agasthya made available an astounding portrayal of Shri Seshadri Swamigal.

The scene shifts to Thirukadayoor, a small village near the South Indian town of Mailaduthurai. The shrine of Lord Amrithakadeswarar and the Goddess Abirami is one of the eight important Shiva temples. Here the Lord Shiva is said to have saved Markandeya from the jaws of death. It was here in more recent times that Amrithlinga Iyer had a son named Subramaniyam. The boy could often be found praying earnestly before the Goddess Abirami. Since he attended to the temple work and because of his relentless worship of the Goddess he came to be known as "Abirami Battar". Indeed so marked was his devotion that he grew more and more disinclined to being with people. This attitude naturally made him unpopular with the public not used to the ways of committed God-realization.

One new moon night as Abirami Battar stood before Abirami rapt in prayer, the ruler of the land visited the temple. The malicious village folk choosing the opportunity complained about Abirami Battar's eccentricities to the king. Calling him, the king Sarabojee asked the man to define the time that new moon night would end. Lost in the radiance of the worship of Abirami, the one so beautiful, without compare, Abirami Battar replied as one in a trance that it was a full moon night, not a new moon one. Already stirred by the villager's complaints, the angered king ordered that the man be hung if the moon did not shine that night.

Sitting before his beloved Abirami on a seat supported by a hundred ropes, with a ferocious fire raging below

Abirami Battar began reciting the verses known today as Abirami Antaadi. At the end of each verse dedicated to the Goddess he would slash one rope

விழிக்கே அருள் உண்டு அபிராம வல்லிக்கு வேதம்சொன்ன
வழிக்கே வழிபட நெஞ்சு உண்டு எமக்கு அவ்வழிகிடக்கப்
பழிக்கே சுழன்று வெம்பாவங்களே செய்து பாழ்நரகக்
குழிக்கே அழுந்தும் கயவர் தம்மோடு என்னகூட்டு இனியே?

*Vizhikae arul undu,
Abirama vallikeuvedam sonna vazhikae, vazhipada
nench undu,
Emaku avazhi kidakka
Pazhikae Suzhanru vem pavankale saidu paz naraga
kuzhikae azhundum kayavar thammod yenna kootiniye*

*Your eyes are merciful,
I have the heart to follow the path laid down by
Abirami valli.
When I have such a path before me
What need have I to suffer the accusations
Of sinful men living in disgraceful hell, what need have
I to be with them.*

It was the 79th verse, an entreaty to Abirami Valli to take her servant unto her, away from the vile accusations of insensitive men. There was a flash, the Goddess let fly her ear stud into the silent dark night sky and there it shone with all the brilliance of the full moon. King and subjects alike could not but bow their heads in silent salutation to the glory of Abirami Battar. Saved from a humiliating end by his fervent devotion, Abirami Battar compiled the Abirami Antaadi in a hundred soul stirring verses. He went on to live a long life of prayer with the total blessings of Goddess Abirami, known from then on as Abirami Bata Barathi.

Why this digression to a distant past. Nadi leaves taken from Kanda Vakya Nadi as well as those inscribed by the sage 'Sukar', state without doubt that Seshadri Swamigal in

his previous birth was known as Abirami Battar. Incredible but then does that not account for the total oneness of the Sathguru with Shakti as indicated by the 'suba mangala yogam' that characterised his life. Wherever he went the Mother's blessings would abound, wherever he was worshipped all good things would happen. The rekhas found on his palms, in the form of the 'trisulam' and the 'abaya varadham', show that he is merged in Shakti the strength behind all creation. Even if he chose to beat another, Mother Shakti would bless that soul. Such was his one-ness with the Mother Goddess. All accounted for by the history of another life.

The Nadi readings also describe Seshadri Swamigal as a Jeevan Muktha, one whose powers are not curtailed by the loss of the physical body. He would help mankind the world over through the difficult days of this 'Yuga', making his presence felt in different ways. He would use for this purpose such souls as he saw fit. The Sathguru's role as a guiding force was to increase in the future; who can dispute that man is more in need of support and clarity today than ever before. Seshadri Swamigal will remain a resting place for the burdens of men, an ever living source of comfort and succour. The flame of realization burns undiminished.

Chapter No. 7

EARLY DAYS AT TIRUVANNAMALAI

Before we share the joys of Seshadri Swamigal's days at Tiruvannamalai, this might be as good a time as any to describe his physical appearance. Seshadri Swamigal was of medium height and lean stature. The early days at Tiruvannamalai saw him wander about town with matted hair and complete disregard for his bodily appearance. His naturally, golden hued skin was often covered with dirt. He would sometimes pour oil on his head and walk about without washing it off for days. With a great effort he would be persuaded to take a shave. When he was half way through he would run away moving all over town with face half shaved. He cared not at all about the way he looked. He had a hearty laugh and would at times laugh continuously for long periods. When he moved he walked fast, when seated he normally adopted the 'Swasthika asana'. His eyes remained half open. Seshadri Swami had a melodious voice. When repeatedly coaxed he would sing a few lines and then stop to explain that they had been composed by Kamakoti Sasthigal. It was impossible to get him to carry on.

The Swamigal having scant respect for clothing could often be seen attired in dirty clothes. If some devotee thoughtfully gave him new ones they would speedily be given away to another or would be torn to shreds and used to beautify the horns of some passing animal. If by chance he chose to use it himself then you could be sure that in next to no time the new clothes would be as dirty as the ones cast off. Nothing of the materialistic world had any meaning for Seshadri Swamigal.

Take for example food. He was known to eat very little or nothing at all. If offered food by devotees he would often

lay it aside saying that the spirits were hungry, so let us feed them. If offered milk he would immediately pour it on the ground. Even this was considered blessing enough by the people of Tiruvannamalai who had come to respect this strange Yogi. There was one saint who was devoted to Seshadri Swamigal. He would beg during the day and then would place whatever food he got in front of the Swami. Only after Seshadri Swamigal had consumed at best a morsel would he himself eat. It was quite common to see Seshadri Swamigal eat food three days stale, unconcerned about the foul smell emanating from it.

Indeed, he had conquered even sleep. He was rarely known to sleep. A devotee once placed a beautiful mattress near the shrine of Muruga at the Arunachaleswarar temple where Seshadri Swamigal would often sit. The object was utterly neglected and left to become covered with grime and dirt. Then occasionally in the afternoons, the Swami would sit upon it. People would then collect the dust from the mattress and take it home to use as cure for various ailments.

And so it was that Seshadri Swamigal made Tiruvannamalai his home. One of the earliest instances noted was his encounter with the seven donkeys. Spotted by one Mr.Surya Narayana Sastri paying obeisance to seven donkeys who were lined up near the temple, the Swami was asked why this respect for the creatures. "They are no donkeys" replied Seshadri Swamigal, "they are the seven rishis", and proceeded to point them out one by one to the astonished Mr.Sastri. His life story is replete with such instances of strange behaviour.

He would talk always in hidden phrases and was never known to get close to anyone. Yet his blessings were assured for the devout. At Tiruvannamalai he could be seen accompanying marriage processions blessing bride and groom, or playing with children. He was known to move freely with good souls, to shun the presence of wrong doers. The later

were some times scolded whether they disclosed their deeds or not, there was nothing the Swami did not know. He would play in the rains and walk about drenched. He would ride on trucks or garbage carts describing them as coaches. He would enter any shop he chose to and play with the things; no one ever restricted him.

In Tiruvannamalai shop owners would eagerly await the arrival of Seshadri Swamigal. He could do whatever he wanted to, in their shops, pull things out, open the cash box, play with the cash. This they knew was the good Swami's way of blessing them. Take for example the case of Mr. Muthiyalu Chettiar whose shop was a great favourite with Seshadri Swamigal. He would visit there often flinging the cash in the cash box around. The Chettiar's business grew from strength to strength and he prospered financially.

There was also on the other hand the story of the hapless mango seller. Going past a cart ladden with mangoes, Seshadri Swamigal desired to have one. The vendor in charge being new and not knowing Seshadri Swamigal made some derogatory remark. Swamigal went on his way. By evening every one of the unfortunate mangoes were spoiled and not fit to be sold. That was when the owner came to know of what had passed. He rushed to the blessed Saint and apologised profusely for the boy's mistake.

While writing about Seshadri Swamigal and his days at Tiruvannamalai one has to necessarily write about another great master, Ramana Maharishi. Seshadri Swamigal had a great soft spot for Ramanar and had time and again indicated that one was not separate from the other. To see one was to have seen the other, to worship one was to have worshipped the other. Ramana Maharishi himself had the highest regard for Seshadri Swamigal and his immense realization. Once when Ramanar was presented a sofa to sit on, he did so with the remark "I have not been able to forget my body like Seshadri Swami". The two shared a deep

bond, together in their spiritual greatness and enlightenment.

During the early days of Seshadri Swamigal's stay at Tiruvannamalai a younger Ramanar, was meditating in a cave near the Arunachaleswarar temple. Boys chose to make him the target of their mirth and repeatedly flung stones at him. Seshadri Swamigal appeared and frightened the boys away. He explained that his son was doing 'Tapas' inside and was in a bad way. According to his instructions Ramanar was carried out. People were aghast to find that the young Saint's penance had gone so far that maggots were beginning to eat his body. Seshadri Swamigal then revived him using the milk and water offered to Lord Arunachaleswarar.

And so it was that Seshadri Swamigal made Tiruvannamalai his home. The extent of his love for Tiruvannamalai can be gathered from the below incident. Seshadri Swamigal once climbed into a train that had stopped at the Tiruvannamalai station. Without warning the train started. The Swami at once wanted to jump out but was prevented from doing so by his disciples. Just as the train crossed the boundaries of Tiruvannamalai Seshadri Swamigal leapt out suddenly and lay hurt upon the tracks. The train stopped, passengers climbed out and the injured Swami was shifted to the side. He had bruises all over. The engine driver then tried to carry on but could not. The train would just not move. Despite his best efforts he nor the other crew could get the train to move even an inch. Then it was explained to them that this was because they had caused harm to a great Saint. The driver then proceeded to apologize to Seshadri Swamigal; the train set off again. The disciples now turned their attention to the injured Swami, only there was no injury to be seen on him. Everyone of those enormous bruises and wounds had disappeared without a trace. Seshadri Swamigal was safe and sound in his beloved Tiruvannamalai.

If the world, the scriptures say was to be compared to a place, the walls of that world would be the walls of the temple, the area of the world is the extent of the temple, the sanctum sanctorum would then be Tiruvannamalai, the idol in the sanctum sanctorum the mountain Arunachala. This exalted world Seshadri Swamigal made his home and glorified it further with his presence.

Chapter No. 8

SHOWERS OF BLESSINGS

"As you get milk from cows so also when you pray with devotion you get blessings", these were the words of Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal. They have proven true in the lives of hundreds of devotees who have in times of needs called out to him. Every time without fail the Sathguru rushes to answer the sincere prayers of his devotees so beloved to him.

Mr. Venkatrama Iyer was a teacher at the Danish Mission School, Tiruvannamalai. He was having a difficult time at work. It seemed one day that suspension was imminent. Worrying about the state of things, Mr. Venkatrama Iyer was making his way past the temple of 'Bootha Narayanan' when he saw Seshadri Swamigal standing before him. Venkatrama Iyer immediately stepped out of his slippers and bent to do obeisance to the Swami. Only to be beaten on the head with his slippers by Seshadri Swamigal, who then went on his way. An already gloomy Venkatrama Iyer was now all the more upset. Even the Swami it seemed had deserted him. He made his way to his school only to see the dreaded envelope on his table. Why should he open it, he already knew the bad tidings it contained. Venkatrama Iyer reluctantly picked up the envelope and proceeded to read the letter it contained. Miracle of miracles the news was better than anything he had imagined. He was being made headmaster. Venkatrama Iyer could scarcely believe his eyes. This was no doubt Seshadri Swami's doing. Overjoyed he flew to get the Swami's blessings astounded that his pain had within a moment been turned into such happiness.

B.V. Narasimha Swami, a lawyer at Salem went through the traumatic experience of losing both children in an accident. His life changed there after and he sought to find

peace within. He wrote the biographies of Ramana Maharishi and Shirdi Sai Baba. He had a great desire to spend time with Seshadri Swamigal whom he had seen once very briefly. He came to Tiruvannamalai for the purpose but found that Seshadri Swamigal could not easily be located. He was advised by an older disciple to continue with his Rama Japa, Swamigal would definitely give him darshan. One day as Mr. Narasimha Swami was seated in a shop, Seshadri Swamigal came and quietly sat beside him. After a while he just as silently got up and went away. Mr. Narasimha Swami's prayer had been answered.

The incident narrated below happened in January 1919. Subramanya Iyer was a clerk in the Taluk Board. He was very devoted to Seshadri Swamigal. The Swami reciprocated by eating whatever food the simple man offered him. One day Mr. Subramanya Iyer applied for leave wanting to travel to Kasi. His boss for some obscure reason, tried to portray the innocent Mr. Iyer as an embezzler who wanted leave because he had misappropriated some money. Suddenly an angry Seshadri Swamigal walked into the office and confronted the dishonest boss. "If you make a single allegation against this helpless man a corpse will leave your house. Beware". The threats of the Saint frightened Mr. Iyer's boss. As if to substantiate the warning the man was bed ridden for the whole of the next week with high fever. All plans to frame Mr. Iyer were hurriedly dropped. Seshadri Swamigal then cautioned Mr. Subramanya Iyer. "Why must you work for this dishonest man. Change your job within five months. Don't worry about anything. Your boss cannot harm you. He is scared of me". As predicted by the Swami, Mr. Subramanya Iyer within five months found another placement in Trichi and left his previous job. Seshadri Swamigal had rushed to the aid of a needy disciple saving him from needless trouble.

Mr. M.K. Subramanya Sastri came to Tiruvannamalai grieving the death of a son. Seshadri Swamigal blessed him

and gave him a coin. He then asked him to return home in peace. In due course a baby girl was born to him and he also prospered financially.

The incident mentioned below goes to show that to Seshadri Swamigal the soul was important, more so than any other criteria. A prostitute Alamelu hid behind a tree one day, as she saw Seshadri Swamigal walk past. She was reluctant to even bring her sinful self into the presence of so sacred a person. The Swami as he went by, dropped a dried chrysanthemum on the woman's head. From then on Alamelu had a life of peace and financial prosperity thanks to a good association which came her way.

Even paragons of mercy can sometime be pushed too far. Rajamanikammal payed the price for her foolishness. The lady desired very much to have a son. She appealed to Seshadri Swamigal who walked away saying that she would bear no son. This went on for years, the woman not accepting Seshadri Swamigal's words. One day her husband fell ill. Rajamanikammal went to see Seshadri Swamigal hoping that he would bless her and her sick husband. She found the saint at the shrine of Lord Muruga and went up to him. Suddenly Seshadri Swamigal slapped her and pulled at her ear studs and went quickly away from the place. Who was to know that this was symbolic of a greater tragedy in store for the ignorant woman. Her husband died the next day and as was in keeping with the traditions of the times, she had to remove her ear studs. To trust without question is to find the path to salvation, to doubt to follow the road to misery.

A distant relative of Seshadri Swamigal, Mr. Suryanarayana Iyer, seeing him stand beneath a neem tree. one day, went up to him with the remark, people call you great. Prove it to me with a miracle". Seshadri Swamigal plucked some dried leaves from the near by neem tree and handed them over to the surprised Mr. Iyer to eat. Suspi-

ciously Mr. Iyer popped one into his mouth only to find that the normally bitter leaf was now sweet. Seshadri Swamigal had cleared his mind.

The Sathguru was also known to cure incurable physical ailments with utmost ease. The Swami's uncle Krishna Swami Sastri's wife Alamelu was in a bad way. She was having severe problems with worms, bad stomach aches, vomiting and rashes all over the body. No treatment would help. She was brought to Tiruvannamalai in this state. As the carriage entered the city the Saint appeared before it. Mr. Krishna Swami Sastri leapt out and clasping the Swami's feet wept aloud. "Only you can help this hapless woman". "Is that so", said Seshadri Swami and jumped into the carriage. He kicked the ailing Alamelu in the stomach and legs. Picking up some sand he made the sick lady eat it. He then sprinkled some more sand over her. Putting some into her hands he instructed her to apply it on her body for the next three days. Alamelu followed the instructions and was completely cured by the fourth day.

Who was to question the remedies prescribed by this Saint. His disciples are testimony to the fact that they are completely effective. He once ordered that a child be given gooseberry powdered with chillies to stop a bout of vomiting. Enough to say that it worked. Sathguru's like Sai Baba of Shirdi have been known to cure ailments with similar remedies. The ways of the guru are inscrutable.

Yet another instance involved Mr. Krishnamurthy from Maduranthakam, who had a terrible problem with chilblains. His fingers would turn numb with pain in winter. When in the grip of this agonising disease he would lose the use of his fingers. This suffering continued for ten years. Mr. Krishnamurthy tried several remedies all of no use. At his wit's end he decided to come to Tiruvannamalai having heard of Seshadri Swamigal and hoping against hope that he would find help there. Reaching Tiruvannamalai he

searched for the saint but could not find him. Dejected he was sitting one day in a coffee stall, rueing his fate. Suddenly some one came and sat beside him. Taking the coffee placed before Mr. Krishnamurthy he poured it into another glass as though to cool it. Mr Krishnamurthy wondered about the strange behaviour of the man beside him was even a little irritated by it. Before he could say anything, came enquires about his condition, "Your fingers pain don't they. Put kum kum on them". Without giving Mr. Krishnamoorthy time to react the person quickly got up and went away. It was then that Mr. Krishnamoorthy realized that this was Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal, the Saint he had come to see; the gentle sage who cooled the coffee for one who had come to him for help knowing that it was too painful for his devotee to do so. Mr. Krishnamoorthy ran in search of the elusive Saint but of no avail. Then remembering the Swami's advice he applied kum kum to his aching fingers; the pain disappeared. The agony that had been a part and parcel of his life for ten long years had ceased altogether, his trial had come to an end.

The five year old son of Nates Iyer, relative of Seshadri Swamigal was ill with fever for a long period. When he recovered he had lost the sight of both eyes. Not knowing what to do the father brought the boy to Tiruvannamalai. "Ambal will take care", said Seshadri Swamigal when the boy was brought to him. As per his instructions, which the temple authorities accepted without question the boy was locked up in the shrine of the Goddess in the Aniannamalai Temple, for the night. In the morning after prayer the shrine was opened. The boy ran out with his vision fully restored. This yet again proves the Sathguru's oneness with the Mother.

Before we continue with Seshadri Swamigal's divine frolic at Tiruvannamalai, let us pause to look once more into the mystery that was a life apart. In a world that finds it difficult to separate real from unreal, Seshadri Swamigal

remains the epitome of everything pure, sacred divine. Prayed to with a heart full of faith and surrender he can turn unhappy situations in life into pleasant ones, solve problems that man is burdened with and altogether transform existence into a more pleasing experience. Yet it is what he can do for the human soul that is of even greater importance; for the true aspirant he is the guide to realms sensed yet unknown, the Sathguru who can take you to greater realization. In times where man gropes in darkness for spiritual guidance, Seshadri Swamikal remains a treasure house that can be opened with the key of devotion. In his own words "the Guru's dharma is to support the disciple, the Sishya's dharma to worship the Guru". "Even as Hanuman took Lord Rama's blessings to cross the ocean, reach Lanka, spot Sita and to later burn Lanka so also the Sathguru's blessings are needed to cross the ocean of life and to burn maya; that ignorance which clouds the human mind".

Chapter No. 9

DIVINE FROLIC IN THE SHADOWS OF ARUNACHALA

The number of people who have benefited from Seshadri Swamigal's grace are countless. To list all the experiences is next to impossible. Some have been chosen and written about to help, people understand the extent of the Sathguru's concern and his capacity to bring peace to stormy lives. He has blessed couples and made marriages happen, cured people of long time ailments, soothed the fears hidden in minds, bestowed financial prosperity, above all helped devotees to grow spiritually, the description of his mercy is endless. To quote the Sathguru, "as moonlight soothes so the Guru gives jnana to his disciples. The lamp and wick are lifeless; when lit, the light that is verily the Goddess, is the life. Similarly the mahan lights the flame within an unawakened soul".

To tell the story of a lady temporarily mentally destablised. Mr. T.V. Subramanya Iyer's sister-in-law started exhibiting exceedingly strange behaviour and soon everyone came to the conclusion that she had been possessed by a spirit. Her condition deteriorated so much that soon she was lying almost lifeless. The family upset at the turn of events, every other effort to cure her having failed, decided to take her to Tiruvannamalai to Seshadri Swamigal who they felt was the only one who could help. When they carried the motionless woman to see the Saint he asked for some turmeric. This he kept against his chest and asked them to apply it on the patient. Which they promptly set about doing. Within half an hour the lady sat up and in a couple of days was completely cured.

Another interesting episode involves the not so believing brother in law of the Taluk Board President Mr. Venkata



Seshadri Swamikal - In a cave in solitude

Subaya. Seshadri Swamigal used to visit Mr. Venkata Subaya's house quite frequently. Though the entire family was attached to him the above mentioned brother-in-law was usually sceptical. One day this gentleman had the misfortune of being bitten by a scorpion. Howling in pain he hopped around trying to find relief. That was when he spied Seshadri Swamigal sitting outside taking in the scene calmly. "If you really are so powerful then remove my pain immediately", screamed the man. "Otherwise I will lock you up". Seshadri Swamigal laughed. "Put sand on the wound" he said. The instruction was obeyed at once but there was no relief. "Chant some mantra", shouted the victim" say Seshadri and apply sand," said the Swami and walked away. Left with no option the disbeliever did just that. The effect was instantaneous. The pain ceased at once. Then the disbeliever turned devotee. He ran after Seshadri Swamigal searching for him but he was not easily to be found. From that day on there was no greater disciple than the atheist turned follower.

The above incident again shows us that things which were a great trial to us mortals was mere trivia to the enlightened Swami. His was a life on another plane one with God, born to alleviate the sufferings of mankind. At his blessed feet there was place for all. Seshadri Swamigal would explain that it was bad Karma which prevented a person from getting the Guru's blessing. "The Guru was always there ready to bless a sincere disciple but sometimes due to the bad Karma accumulated by an individual, His grace could not be received."

Thayammal was a lady disciple of Seshadri Swamigal. The lady as was her want took fruits and milk for Lord Muruga one Shasti day. As she entered the shrine Seshadri Swamigal took the offerings from her with the remark, "I am Murugan, give them to me." He distributed the fruits and drinking half the milk he gave the vessel to the dumb

founded lady. Thayammal was furious. She returned home mentally scolding Swami for having taken her offering to Muruga. She was even upset that this Saint with scant respect for cleanliness had touched her vessel and drunk out of it. In a fit of rage she went home and thoroughly washed the receptacle. The next day as she made her way to the temple, she came across an irate Seshadri Swamigal who chided her sharply. "Wash the vessel will you ? So clean you are is it ? Go away go away." He chased the lady from his presence. Thayamal was astounded that the Swami was aware of something that was known only to her. It then struck Thayamal that the Lord himself had accepted her offerings and she had not had the good sense to be grateful for it. For six months Seshadri Swamigal continued to banish the lady whenever she approached him. Eventually a thoroughly repentant Thayamal went to the extent of beating herself and pleading for mercy. Seshadri Swamigal then relented and forgave her.

The only time in forty years that Seshadri Swamigal set foot out of Tiruvannamalai was to go to Selai Pandal for a short while. Mr. T.S. Jagadish Iyer found to his chagrain that some money and gold was missing from his house. Despite all efforts, the lost property could not be traced. Mr. Jagadish Iyer proceeded to Tiruvannamalai and as he entered the city saw Seshadri Swamigal walking towards him. He stopped the carriage and told the Swami about his problems. "I was coming there for the very purpose," replied the Swami and getting into the carriage along with Mr. Iyer left for Selai Pandal. As soon as he entered the house Seshadri Swamigal remarked that there was a thief in the house and left at once. The meaning of those words soon became clear. The family priest Dikshitar, had taken the things and hidden it behind the deity in the village temple. Seeing the man's suspicious movements inside the temple, the villagers informed Mr. Jagadish Iyer. After due investigations the culprit was apprehended. As Seshadri Swamigal said there

was indeed a thief in the house. The family was sincerely grateful to Swamigal for his blessing and guidance.

There were plenty of examples to show that Seshadri Swamigal was fully aware of future events. One Mr. Appava Chettiar of Puthupalayam constructed a chariot for Arunachaleswarar. The Saint on seeing it said that it had the curse of the Goddess Lakshmi. Three years later during a storm the chariot was struck by lightening and was completely burnt down. The Swami's prophesy had come true.

Seshadri Swamigal with his aversion to sleep often scolded others if he thought that they were too particular about it. One afternoon he was sitting with Manika Swami at the Kamba Thilayanar Sannidhi. The latter was feeling very sleepy, but Seshadri Swamigal warned him against sleeping. Despite all that Manika Swami could not help but fall asleep. Then he had a horrifying dream. He was being carried away into a frightening world by the servants of Yama, God of death. No amount of pleading would make them leave him. The world they were carrying him to was terrible, Manika Swami was terrified. As he struggled to save himself, all of a sudden Seshadri Swamigal came to his rescue. Gulping with fear at the experience Manika Swami woke up with a start and saw Seshadri Swamigal watching him. Having fallen asleep despite Swami's warning, Manika Swami was ashamed at his folly. Then Seshadri Swamigal advised him to henceforth sleep after applying the holy ashes on his head. Then there would be no night mares or fear of death.

Kuppuswamy Gurukkal was a priest at the Arunachaleswarar temple. His wife Meenambal was terminally ill with tuberculosis. One afternoon the priest as was customary made his way to the temple. His wife was at that time at home sitting in her room leaning against her mother 'Swarnambal' who was blind. Meenambal soon breathed her last. Swarnambal however was unaware of this she

continued to sit supporting her daughter, her son-in-law was at the temple. It was then about four in the evening Seshadri Swamigal was at that time in the Vallala Maharaja Mandapam. "Meena has gone" he repeated four or five times. The people around then thought it fit to go to the priest's house, where they found the body of the lady; as Seshadri Swamigal said she had indeed departed. The priest was informed and the last rites conducted.

A similar incident occurred at the time when Vittoba Swami passed away. Vittoba Swami was a Saint who lived in Pollur. He was known for his intense devotion to Vittoba and his compassion towards his fellow human beings. At about six one morning Seshadri Swamigal pointed towards the sky and said "there goes Vittoba". Though it was not clear then to those around what the words meant, the clarification came at about eleven in the form of a telegram, conveying the news that Vittoba Swami had passed away at six that morning.

Chapter No. 10

SUBLIME GIFTS

Ramana Maharishi when once asked about Siddhis said that manifesting these powers would decrease divine bliss. Yet, said Ramanar an incarnation of mercy like Seshadri Swamigal would bless even without being asked such was the ocean of compassion that he was. Along with God realization there comes to enlightened souls the capacity to perform seemingly impossible tasks. This is known as Siddhi. A Siddhi means being able to do what an ordinary person cannot, the fruit of severe penance and then the blessings of God. God realized Saints have often at their command infinite powers enabling them to achieve with ease that which would normally seem, impossible. For a Yogi like Seshadri Swamigal who was virtually one with Shakti nothing was difficult. While producing objects like sacred ash, is a form of Siddhi commonly manifested with no permanent effect on the soul; Seshadri Swamigal could easily transform lives of disciples such was the power of his realization. To touch the inner most depths of man to change the very fibre of human existence was something that could be accomplished only by a divine master. The early parts of this chapter talks of tangible, external manifestations of the powers of the Sathguru, the latter, of more serious awakenings of the human soul.

Tiruvannamalai due to the presence of an igneous mountain is a very warm place. In addition to the terrible heat of the summers, water during those months would also be scarce. When the heat got too excruciating the people would plead with Seshadri Swamigal to cool the area. The saint would glance upwards and within minutes the rain would come pelting down. This was a common phenomenon. One very warm day Mr. Ardhanari Iyer complained

to Seshadri Swamigal about the heat. The Yogi responded by saying that "your clothes are wet, you'll have to change them." In a short while the meaning of those words became apparent. From a clear cloudless sky came torrential rains pouring down incessantly for three long hours. Mr. Ardhanari Iyer was soaked to the skin. The Swami himself sat in the verandah of a devotee's house enjoying the rains, to him this was child's play.

Mr. T.K. Sundereswar Iyer, Mr. Rama Rao and Mr. Venkatrama Iyer prayed to the Saint in different places at the same time and each saw him. "Wherever I am worshipped there I will be," said the great soul, and so it really was.

There were two trees in the compound belonging to Subalakshmi a disciple of Seshadri Swamigal. One day the Swami called Subalakshmi out and pointed to two birds seated on one of the trees. Then in a short while the tree was covered with birds. Big ones and small ones, birds in various sizes and colours, they all came to the garden. Seshadri Swamigal stood in the midst of this avalanche of birds playing, with them, petting them and talking to them. It was a pretty spectacle, the compassionate Saint with his feathered friends a picture of total harmony. Then Subalakshmi asked the Swami how long he would keep the birds with him. Did they not have to go home, would not their families wait for them. "I'll send them home soon," said the Swami and taking a thread from the cloth on his person he blew it into the air. One by one the birds flew away; soon all that remained were two bare trees. All forms of life responded to the Saint's call.

While Seshadri Swamigal would take care of the practical problems that his disciples had he was more concerned about making them grow spiritually. To a Guru a good pupil is a welcome gift. "Mahans", in the words of Seshadri Swamigal, "call and bless disciples". There are

several incidents which throw light on the methods used by the Swami to introduce his devotees to another world, showing them the sublime sights soothing to the soul.

Mr. Venkatachala Mudaliar went to Madras one day secure in the knowledge that Seshadri Swamigal would take care of his family while he was away. That evening the Swami told the Mudaliar's wife, Subalakshmi that there would be a theft in the next house but she was not to worry. They would be safe. Exactly as predicted by Swami there was a commotion in the next house that night. Seshadri Swamigal visited Venkatachala Mudaliar's house and comforted the family. Then he touched the Mudaliar's wife on the head. The lady was blessed with a vision of the Gods, a sight more beautiful than anything she had seen before. Leaving her in another world, Seshadri Swamigal left the house. In the morning when the lady slowly came out of this trance like state she was horrified to find that she had lost her vision. She could not see. As she stumbled around the house bemoaning her plight, Seshadri Swamigal walked in. This long time disciple of the Swami wept before him wanting to know why she had to undergo this trial. Seshadri Swamigal then wiped her eyes with his cloth and she could see again, her heart full of the enchanting sight she had seen.

There is then the tragic story of the wife of Mr. Sundareswarar who paid the price for not heeding Seshadri Swamigal's warning. The lady was in the habit of taking darshan of the Saint. For close to three months every time she went to get the Swami's blessings he would ask her if she desired to see the 'Yama Patnam', meaning the land of death. The lady was bewildered. When Seshadri Swamigal persisted one day she asked him to show her that land. The Saint opened his mouth and bade her look inside. What was there but the vision of a horrifying world, the land of death. Mrs. Sundareswarar shuddered in fright at the terrifying sight she had just seen. She wondered why the Swami had

shown her that scene. A few days later she was to visit Madras for a marriage. Seshadri Swamigal, when he came to know of her plans, forbade her with strict instructions that she was not to accompany her family. Though the lady cancelled her trip, at the last minute not wanting to upset her relatives she decided to go. There following a bout of cholera she passed away. Seshadri Swamigal had warned his disciple of impending doom yet she chose to ignore it. Mrs. Sundareswarar had paid the price for disregarding her Guru's advice.

Seshadri Swamigal has time and again stressed the need for implicit faith in the Guru's instruction. The reason for certain advice given might not be clear to the disciple at the time when it was made. But then a mere mortal has not the power to see the future. To trust and surrender without question, that is the path to eternal peace and happiness.

Mr. Muragesa Mudaliar, an extremely religious person had a long standing desire to see Seshadri Swamigal. He visited Tiruvannamalai along with his family. He prayed to the Swami to give him spiritual guidance. Seshadri Swamigal on seeing his sincerity took him to the sanctum sanctorum of the Muruga Shrine at the temple. He placed his right hand on the man's head. Then Mr. Mudaliar had an indescribable experience. He saw the divine light. The untold bliss made him forgetful of all else. He danced about crying Seshadri, Seshadri as one brimming with happiness paying no heed to people around or anything else. This went on for a couple of days. His family was perturbed and went to Seshadri Swamigal asking for guidance. He would be okay, explained the Swami it was only the inexorable joy of seeing what was divine. In a few more days Mr. Muragesa Mudaliar returned to his normal state and resumed his daily routine. But the light he had seen and enjoyed, gave him peace of an unimaginable magnitude.

The last few chapters have detailed incidents in people's lives, experiences of various kinds, spiritual and practical. These descriptions show how Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal has bestowed his grace and compassion on anyone who has appealed to him with faith. His primary concern however always remained the spiritual growth of his disciples. To a soul who was constantly one with God, to one who had an aversion for all things wordly, to one who had forgotten his body and lived aflame with realization all the materialistic benefits his disciples acquired were to be but stepping stones to greater wisdom and realization. "Like food should be eaten for it's taste to be known so also jnana should be tasted to be understood". To surrender one's life to the Sathguru blessed with jnana unsurpassed, was to build a life on the unshakeable foundation of clarity and peace.

Chapter No. 11

THE SATHGURU SPEAKS

विश्वं दर्पणदृश्यमाननगरीतुल्यं निजान्तर्गतं
पश्यन्नात्मनि मायया बहिरिवोद्भूतं यदा निद्रया
यः साक्षात्कुस्ते प्रबोधसमये स्वामानमेवाद्वयं
तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ।।

"The universe is like a city reflected in a mirror-seen inside the mirror but really outside of it.. And it is again, as in a dream, an inside phenomenon, appearing outside but really inside. The Truth or Original is the supreme Brahman, the one without a second. One's Atman is Its reflection seen through the media of senses, mind, and intellect. The identity of the supreme Brahman and one's Atman is understood on self-illumination. He by whose grace that illumination comes to me—to that Dakshinamurti, the supreme Being, who is embodied in the auspicious and benign Guru, I offer my profound salutation."

Satguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal was a Brahma Jnani, a Yogi of untold enlightenment and superior realization. The divine instructions he had for his disciples were not easily followed. Yet he would try to explain in as simple a way as possible the message to be delivered. His words at all times like his every deed conveyed the unblemished truth. Indeed he portrayed truth in a tangible form he was a light incomparable. Seshadri Swamigal wrote no book's hardly gave discourses, yet what has been collected from his advices to devotees and what he has from time to time expounded, has been detailed below. An effort however inadequate has been made to elucidate the sublime teachings of a great master, so as to offer guidelines for a more meaningful life.

Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal set exacting standard for those disciples whom he chose to draw close to him. There was to be no compromise on the ideals of truth and undisturbed composure that the Saint was so particular about. Those souls he selected to be with him would repeatedly be tested to prove their mettle. There was not to be even a drop of falsehood in them. Yet if satisfied the Sathguru was an ocean of compassion, ready to give his disciples maximum peace and happiness. The standards however were never to be lowered, spiritual growth was all important not to be sacrificed at any cost, there was never to be any clouding of this vital aspect. Once accepted by the Sathguru, testing times notwithstanding, the guidance and mercy of the gracious master was always available. What was to be borne in mind, was the fact that so great was the Sathguru's renunciation and realization that worldly matters were never his prime concern. The accent was always on spiritualism and devotion. Materialistic comforts were secondary, given to help man achieve the more permanent and meaningful goal of self realization.

Seshadri Swamigal advised that any work be commenced with a prayer to Vinayaka the remover of obstacles. He advocated the chanting of the hymn.

शुक्लांबरधरं विष्णुं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजम् ।
प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत् सर्व विघ्नोपशान्तये ॥

*Suklam Bharataram Vishnum
Sashi Varnam Chatur Bhujam
Prasana Vadhanam Dyayaet
Sarva Vigna Upa Shantayae.
The one who wears a white cloth,
The one who encompasses the world,
The one coloured like the moon,
The four armed one, with joyous face*

*The one who removes all obstacles.
I meditate on Him, the Lord Vinayaka.*

Man was to concentrate on the Brahman. When the mind in man merges with Iswaran, man forgets his body. Such a man conquers death and lives a life of fearlessness and peace. Man who lived in fear of Yamen or the God of death was no man at all. To conquer this fear, absorption in Iswaran was essential.

Seshadri Swamigal himself worshipped Lord Rama and often advised his disciples to do the same. The Ramayanam he would say could not be read, it could only be lived. What he meant was that the life of Lord Rama the Dharma Swarupa was an ideal for all. He highlights the role blessings play in life. Hanuman by the grace of Rama crossed the ocean with effortless ease and brought solace to a tearful Sita in Lanka separated from her Lord. Hanuman then burned Lanka.

'Ulankasindho Saleelam Saleelam'. To the great Hanuman who crossed the ocean with supreme ease I offer my prayers. Like Hanuman, a disciple, with the blessings of the Guru, can cross the ocean that is life with felicity to merge with God thus burning the ignorance or illusion of maya, the unreal world. The tremendous significance ascribed to the role of the Guru and the paramount importance of his grace are here emphasised.

Yet another comparison comes in the Sathguru's definition of lust as the ten, headed demon king Ravana, to be killed at all cost. He advocated the practise of truth, peace, restraint and patience to kill this emotion that often plays havoc in the human mind, likening it to the horrific Ravana.

आपदामपहर्तारं दातारं सर्वसंपदाम् ।
लोकाभिरामं श्रीरामं भूयो भूयो नमाम्यहम् ॥

*Apadham Abahataram
Dataram Sarve Sambadhaam
Lo kabhi Ramam Shri Ramam
Bhooyo Bhooyo Namamyaham.
One who removes all dangers,
One who gives all wealth,
The one most pleasing to the world,
I worship that Shri Rama again and again.*

Sat Karma or good deeds were to be performed at all cost said the Sathguru, as taught by the life of Shri Rama.

Aditya Hridaya Stotram was to be repeated for Moksha. Worship of the sun god would help man conquer anger which the seer called rakshasa or the demon within. Seshadri Swamigal laid much stress on the need to dispel anger and lust from the human mind both emotions which would disturb the stillness within, so needed for spiritual upliftment. Any disciple prone to fits of anger would be severely taken to task by a thoroughly displeased Sathguru. Hence the worship of the sun, to show man the light, for freedom from anger and the birth of jnana within the mind.

The Sathguru accorded the highest place to the worship of the Guru. He equated the Guru with Shiva and stressed the importance of sincere devotion to him. When asked who was greater Brahma or Vashistha the Sathguru explained that Vashistha was superior. Vishwamitra when described as a Brahma Rishi by Brahma wanted these words to come from his Guru Vashistha. Only then was he prepared to accept the status.

Just as Guru bhakti was of vital importance, so also a good Sishya was the source of enormous joy to the Guru. Purity was the first requisite of a good disciple. To quote Seshadri Swamigal "a good Sishya should be as clean as a fly, strong as an ant and loyal as the dog". This seemingly strange comparison is elaborated thus. The fly whatever

its role otherwise, is clean as far as it's own self is concerned. The continuous cleaning motion that it keeps up proves this. The ant is always busy never rests for a moment, constantly hard at work. As for the dog, its loyalty to its master needs no further elucidation. Hence the Swami's exaltation of the characteristics of these creatures.

Seshadri Swamigal laid much emphasis on the need for concentration while mediating. A disciple Mr. Narayana Sastrigal recounts how when he was once attempting to mediate he was distracted by the fearsome sight of the Swami waving a sword around his head. Mr. Narayana Sastrigal let his eyes follow the movement of the sword. Only to be chided by Seshadri Swamigal who asked him what meditation he was doing, distracted to bits as he was. Total concentration was needed for the best results.

The same advice was given to Mr. Ramaswami Sastri who sat down to meditate, yet found concentration hard to come by. Seshadri Swami appeared, made him open his mouth and pushed against his throat. The agitated mind then settled down and with peace restored meditation was fruitful.

Seshadri Swamigal always maintained that pre-occupation with caste stood in the way of Jnana. In a world torn apart by this very problem the value of this instruction should not be undermined. The human soul is beyond all caste; it has its source in the eternal life supreme. To rise above narrow sectarian limitations to be continually with God, that was the road to salvation.

The Sathguru compares the influence of Jnana, philosophy on the human soul to the soothing effect of moonlight. The reflection of the sun the Sathguru says, "when seen in water moves if there is a disturbance on the surface. Yet the movement of the sun is but an illusion. The real sun is unshakeable; like the Atman. The soul itself is

silent and still, untouched by the ripples that arise in the mind. To realise this truth, is Jnana or wisdom".

In a similar context Seshadri Swamigal makes clear the point to a disciple by standing along with him before a mirror. There are then the real persons as well as the mirror images. When the mirror is removed all that remains are the persons themselves. The reflection ceases to exist. Similarly until the dawning of wisdom there are two entities the Jeevatman or the individual soul and the Paramatman or the Light supreme. With the shedding of maya, the illusion that the two are separate, ends. Then there is but one complete whole. The Jeevatman merged in the infinite bliss of the Paramatman.

Yet again an exposition of the essence of Vedanta was given by the Swami using the verse from the Maha Narayana Upanishad.

यो वेदादौ स्वरः प्रोक्तो वेदान्ते च प्रतिष्ठितः ।
तस्य प्रकृतिलीनस्य यः परः स महेश्वरः ॥

*Yo Veda Dhou Swara Proktho
Vedande cha Pradishtithaha
Tasya Prakrithi Linasya
Yah parasya Maheswaraha.*

That Swara present even before the Vedas;
The essence of Vedanta that sacred syllable OM;
the secret behind all creation,
Is the supreme Lord Maheswara.

This intervention came during a discourse on Vedanta being conducted by Mr. A.V. Gopala Chariyar at Tiruvannamalai. Seshadri Swamigal entered saying "Not like that, Not like that". Mr. Gopala Chariyar then asking the Swami to clarify, came the above interpretation.

The need to control the five senses was emphasised by Seshadri Swamigal when he compared the worship of

God to the eating of a Jack fruit. "Just as the five layers covering the actual edible portion need to be removed so as to taste the fruit, so also the five senses should be conquered to reach God. As food had to be eaten for its taste to be known, in the same way Jnana had to be experienced to be understood."

Chapter No. 12

GUIDELINES TO THE LIGHT SUPREME

Sri Krishna in the Gita or The Song Celestial defines the different paths by which man can reach the divine. 'Karma Yoga' or the discharge of one's duties in life to the best of one's abilities with no thought for the fruits, mind steadily fixed on God. 'Jnana Yoga' or the realization of the true nature of the Atman or the light within, leading in the end to its merging with the Paramatman.

इति भक्तियागो नाम द्वादशो ध्यायः ॥

In the last verse of the twelfth chapter in the Gita comes the reference to Bakthi Yoga. 'Bakthi Yoga' refers to the complete surrender and total devotion to the divine. Follow one path or all ancient wisdom says they all take you to the Light supreme.

Seshadri Swamigal illustrated quoting from the Ramayana; the three yogas which can be adopted by any human being to attain God realization. The life of Guhan the boat man was the example. Guhan ferried Lord Rama across the river when the latter left his kingdom to live in the forest to honour his father's words. The boatman lead an exemplary life, exhibiting 'swadharma'. He lived to perfection his prescribed role in life, thus depicting Karma Yoga. He was a devotee of the Lord and was one with him, a point brought out when Rama embraced him. This potrays Bakthi Yoga. In the end this servant of God gives his life drowning in the Ganges, the sacred river, thus attaining Moksha, symbolising Jnana Yoga. The three paths Karma, Jnana and Bakthi thus take man to the same goal, that is union with God. The word Yoga conveys the idea of union, the method adopted being defined by the terms Karma, Jnana or Bakthi.

Though a Jnani Seshadri Swamigal laid much stress on Bakthi. "Worship one God", he would say. "He will take care of you". Indeed, worship of and surrender to the Guru are the ways prescribed to overcome the ignorance and darkness prevalent in this Yuga. Since Karma could not be escaped by anyone but Iswaran, Seshadri Swamigal advised his disciples to play their part in life accepting whatever it brought them as the blessing of God. This required the cultivation of a steady mind unrocked by the violent emotions of anger and lust as repeatedly stated, by the Swami.

To continue with Seshadri Swamigal's words on Bakthi. The Swami recommended devotion and worship as the keys to a serene life. "Within the worship of Krishna, Shakti and Shiva the whole universe would find its place". He suggested the repetition of the Krishna Karnamritam, the Lalitha Sahasranam and the Shiva Saharanamam as ways to discipline the mind, and to kill the ego within. Study of the Mahabharatha and Narayana Japa or taking the name of Narayana, served the same purpose, as did the chanting of the Thirupugazh. Seshadri Swamigal points out that without sacrifice there can be no liberation for the soul. He calls 'Sacrifice the bitter fruit that must be consumed to reach the feet of God'. Again on Bakthi he said "worship Arunachala with sincere devotion to find peace within". "When in Tiruvannamalai one's mind should be immersed in the worship of Arunachaleswarar, of Shiva and Shakti and not distracted by external activities." He was known to arraign the shop keepers of Tiruvannamalai if they failed to display the adequate devotion, "Time only to open and shut shops, no time for Arunachala". The seer was perennially concerned about the spiritual upliftment of mankind.

Another outstanding feature of Seshadri Swamigal's life was equanimity. In a world where there are a million divisions of rich and poor, literate and illiterate, man and beast, not to forget the ubiquitous religious divides, Seshadri

Swamigal's life was a striking lesson in the one-ness of all. While his nondiscrimination among people of varying classes has already been described, the same was applicable to beasts as well.

A cat once drank the milk set aside for Swami. Before it could be changed Seshadri Swamigal appeared and drank the remnants. While the disciples around protested the Saint calmly explained that all life was the same, the difference was a product of the human mind.

To tell the story of the snake. As the Swami sat one day a snake appeared from the near by wall and climbed up the Swami's neck protecting the Sage's face with its hood. When the horror stricken people tried to harm it the Saint told them to leave it alone it was not to be touched. Seshadri Swamigal had the same love for all creatures.

A similar incident showed Seshadri Swamigal's total contempt for bodily needs. The Swami was found delving into a dust bin outside a wedding hall eating the remains from the leaves inside while a dog was doing the same from the other side. The people in the hall rushed out on seeing this and pleaded with the Swami to come in and eat, to leave those filthy remains alone, it was not good. "What was good and what bad", replied the unperturbed Sage. He was verily the fire which purified all that was not good. His 'sama drishti' was a peak that could not even be dreamt of.

While talking of love of all creatures the seer was once seen petting a new born pup which he had carried away from its mother. After a while he took the creature back to the mother displaying no signs of fear. The bitch too though unused to Seshadri Swamigal did not seem to mind, as though aware of the gentle nature of the Saint. The Sathguru had a same sightedness unequalled, to him man and beast were the same as were comfort and squalor. He was beyond the pair of opposites; the Yogi of equanimity so extolled in the Gita.

Seshadri Swamigal explained a japa Gayatri as that japa which goes on incessantly in the body, the mantra 'aham sa soham' which is uttered with every breath. The continuous process goes on without any voluntary effort. In the ocean of Karma, of birth and death, the Sathguru portrays the body as the ship. The five sense organs represent the people and the life force the sailor. For the ship that is the body to sail through the sea of Karma and to be one with the Paramatman the sailor or Jeeva has to steer carefully, totally in command, undisturbed by the senses. Meaning that to negotiate the path through which each person has to travel in this world the soul must be in command, mind withdrawn within, having conquered the senses.

Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal also suggested the chanting of the below mentioned slokas everyday during prayer.

मौन व्याख्या प्रकटितपरब्रह्मतत्त्वं यवानं ।
वर्षिष्ठानते वसत् ऋषिगणैरावृतं ब्रह्मनिष्ठैः ॥
आचार्येन्द्रं करकलिताचिन्मुद्रमानन्दमूर्तिं ।
स्वात्मारामं मुदितवदनं दक्षिणामूर्तिमीडे ॥

Mauna Vyakya prakatitha
Parabrahma tatvam
Yuvanam varshishtante
vasatrishiganai ravritham
brahma nishtai
Acharyentram karakalitha
Chin mudram ananda murthim
Swathma ramam muthitavathanam
Dakshinamoorthy medae.

The one who conveys truth through silence

One of Eternal youth surrounded by sages of wisdom,
and Brahmarishis

With his hand depicting the chin mudra, a picture of
extreme bliss.

Epitome of realization,¹ with a countenance ever joyful,
Him the greatest teacher, I worship the Lord
Dakshinamoorthy.

मन्दस्मितस्फुटितमुग्धमुखारविन्दं
कन्दर्पकोटि शतसुन्दर दिव्यमूर्तिम् ।
आताम्रकोमल जटाकलितेन्दुलेखम्
आलोकये वटतटीनिलयं दयालुम् ॥

Mantha smitham spuritha mukhta mugaravindam
Kandarpa kodi sada sundara divya murthim
Adhamra komala jada kadithentu lekam
Alokaye vadathadi nilayam deyalum.

The Lotus faced one with beatific smile.

A thousand times more beautiful than Kama Deva,
with divine body.

The One who wears the crescent moon on his matted
locks,

I worship that Lord Dakshinamoorthy who meditates
beneath the Banyan tree.

ज्ञानानन्दमयं देवं निर्मलस्फटिकाकृतिम् ।
आधारं सर्वविद्यानां हयग्रीवं उपास्महे ॥

Nyana nanda Mayam Devam
Nirmala spadika kritim
Adharam Sarva Vidyanam
Hyagreevam Upasmahae.

Complete in enlightenment and bliss,
Pure, as clear as crystal in appearance;
The foundation of all knowledge
I worship the Lord Hayagriva.

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तोमां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

Ananyas Chinthayanthomam
Ye janaha Paryupasathae
Jesham nithyabhiyukthanam
Yoga kshemem vahamyaham.

Who worships me with devoted mind,
Eternally surrendered to Me,
I carry the burden of their wants.

Seshadri Swamigal who lived a life of complete enlightenment wanted that his disciples grow spiritually. His constant advice to his disciples was to be one with God. The guidelines mentioned in the last couple of chapters are to help them in this endeavour. Above all the efforts taken to discipline the mind, are the qualities of faith and surrender. Having entrusted one's life to the Sathguru the disciple has only to follow the instructions he receives, with sincerity and devotion. The door then opens to a new life, one of truth and tranquility.

Chapter No. 13

MAHASAMADHI

करुणासागरं शान्तम् अरुणाचलवासिनम् ।
श्रीशेषाद्रिगुरुं वन्दे ब्रह्मीभूतं तपोनिधिम् ॥

Karuna Sagaram Santham Arunachala Vasinam.

*Shri Seshadri Gurum Vande Brimmi Bhoodam
Taponidim.*

1929, the fortieth year of Seshadri Swamigal's stay at Tiruvannamalai. It was the Tamil month of Karthikai, November-December by the English Calender. An auspicious month at Tiruvannamalai, with the festival of Karthikai Deepam being celebrated then.

Seshadri Swamigal was then 59. One day he walked up to Subalakshmi ammal a long time disciple and asked her "Shall I build another house and do Yoga?". The lady used to the Saint's way of talking in obscure terms did not stop to think deeply about the words "Go ahead and build another house,". She said callously. If only Subalakshmi ammal had known the meaning behind the question or the purpose for which it was being asked she would never have replied, as she did. For Seshadri Swamigal was at that time contemplating leaving this world of mortals to unite with the Lord, the house he wanted to change was this body. The words of Subalakshmi Seshadri Swamigal accepted as instructions from Parashakti, the time had come to depart.

It was then days of great festivities in Tiruvannamalai. The place was ablaze with religious fervour as devotees worshipped the Lord Arunachaleswarar, the Goddess Unnamalai and Arunachala. Seshadri Swamigal, a living God to the people was also the object of much devotion. One day in a moment of heightened emotion his disciples wanted to perform 'abishekam' for Seshadri Swamigal. The Swami

was against it saying that he would get a fever. The enthusiastic disciples were however not to be stopped. After much pleading the Swami gave in, saying that they could pour water on his body, but only sprinkle a few drops on his head. Then began the loving display of affection by the devotees. They shaved and washed the Swami and prepared him for the rituals of worship. Then they carried water in a pot from the well and from that point on there was no stopping the enthused disciples. The Swami's instructions forgotten, all that the stream of devotees who appeared wanted, was to offer their gratitude by way of worship, to this loving Saint, their benefactor. Pot after pot of water was poured on Seshadri Swamigal by the unending stream of disciples drenched as he was from head to toe. This went on endlessly, a display of reverence but one that was to be the last. The ocean of mercy that he was Seshadri Swamigal sat still and let everyone have their full. When at last this show of devotion ceased, he got up, the fever had begun.

For forty days the fever raged, Seshadri Swamigal was very ill. Yet as was his way he walked about as usual uncurtailed by a sick body; no one could get him to rest. The fever took its toll however and the already slightly built, Saint became further emaciated. When he could walk no more, Seshadri Swamigal came and lay down on the verandah in the house of the temple priest. The news of the Swami's illness spread like wild fire. People rushed from all over doctors and physicians among them. The Swami's life must at all costs be saved. But of what use. Seshadri Swamigal resolute as always refused all medical attention, food or water. He would have none of it. What could his disciples do; but watch in anguish.

As Seshadri Swamigal lay, his mind fused with the light supreme, disciples poured in from far and near. A disciple rushed to Tiruvannamalai from Salem the moment he heard the news. Carrying some oranges for the ailing Swami he made his way to where Seshadri Swamigal lay.

Seeing him the Saint sat up and picking up one of the oranges his disciple had brought, crushed it and threw it on to the road. People around watched Seshadri Swamigal's every movement with tears in their eyes. The time they knew was drawing near when their beloved Swami would no longer be with them. The sorrow that loomed in their hearts was unimaginable. Tiruvannamalai without Seshadri Swamigal was unthinkable to many, he had become a permanent part of so many lives.

Karthikai ended and the month of Marghazi began, a month of prayer in temples and Hindu homes. Seshadri Swamigal got up and started walking towards the temple. A shawl was wrapped around his frail shoulders. Entering the temple the Saint prayed one last time to his Lord and Mother, to Arunachaleswarar and his consort Unnamalai. To Lord Muruga in whose Shrine he would often sit. Invoking the Lords one last time, forty years after he first entered the temple as a young Saint of nineteen, Seshadri Swamigal slowly made his way back to the priest's house. He could barely walk. The rains had also commenced. Uncaring the great master walked on.

As he approached the house there was a puddle of rain water on the road. Seshadri Swami seemed to slip and fall into this patch of water. He refused to get up. His disciples tried in vain to take him to shelter but the saint would not be touched. There he lay in the water, soaked by the continuing rains, weak with fever yet with absolute contempt for his body. From a master who had all along disregarded his body, this was one last proclamation to the watching world that the body was of no importance what so ever. It was the Atman or the soul within that was of paramount importance; that should be taken care of.

It was two o'clock at night when Seshadri Swamigal allowed himself to be carried indoors. Prayers now commenced. The 'Sundara Kandam' was read till late at night.



ஸ்ரீ சேஷாத்ரி பீரூம்மம் — (திருவண்ணாமலை)
ஐத்யண்டி பித்த இன் லிமா — 28-1-70

Seshadri Swamigal Adhistanam, Tiruvannamalai

Subalakshmi Ammal came to see her Guru, broke down and wept unconsolably. "This was not the house, I wanted you to change Swami. How can you do this." Seshadri Swamigal bestowed his loving glance on her, the Master's soul was aflame with the vision of God. Indeed the Saint's face was now aglow with a light that seemed to be from another world. All those who came to have one last darshan of the Sathguru were struck by the light which the Swami seemed to now radiate.

It was the 21st day of Margazhi in the Tamil year named Vibahava Varsham, fourth January 1929 by the English calendar, The day was a Friday, the thithi, bahula Navami. Seshadri Swamigal lay motionless. His face was a picture of serenity, his mind absorbed in the worship of God, his Atman one with Shiva and Shakti. At a time when the planets were in a position identical to when the Mahan was born, Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal attained Maha Samadhi and merged forever with the Eternal Light.

Tiruvannamalai which had been a city of gloom since Seshadri Swamigal's illness began, now wept aloud at this bereavement. Death always brings with it its share of sorrow but when a Sathguru, the keeper of many souls departs, then the emotion is far too over whelming to contain.

Grief stricken disciples slowly set about preparing the Mahan's body for its journey to its final resting place. The body was washed with great reverence and then adorned with sandal, honey, paneer and flowers. Pooja was performed. Ramana Maharishi, such a favourite with the Swamigal, came to pay his last respects to the saint he had loved and revered. All of Tiruvannamalai silently offered their prayers at the feet of one who lived as God on earth. In utter solemnity the body of Mahan Shri Seshadri Swamigal was laid to rest at the site where his ashram stands today.

Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal had become one with God leaving behind scores of sorrowful devotees. The fragrance of his life on earth lingers. Fifty nine years of incessant prayer, a life which transcended both worlds mortal and sublime. Guru and dispeler of darkness to his disciples this ocean of mercy lived for the good of mankind. In Tiruvannamalai an Adhistanam can be found at the site of his Samadhi, an Ashram for this merciful saint, in the shadow of silent. Arunachala; the Mahan lives.

THE LIGHT BURNS ON

Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal left his physical body in 1929, leaving behind scores of disconsolate devotees. Yet a few years after his Mahasamadhi, incidents started coming to light, incidents which spoke of the Sathguru communicating with disciples, sometimes through a medium, sometimes in a trance, again as a vision. In Tiruvannamalai, Unjaloor, Coimbatore and Madras the Sathguru had made his presence felt. This gave disciples much cause for celebration. Seshadri Swamigal who had taken so many lives, so many souls into his keeping still held the reins in his merciful hands, guiding and comforting man. In a world naturally disbelieving, the tendency is very often to brush off as impossible, phenomena that are not fully understood. For a Jeevan Muktha like the Sathguru born for the spiritual well being of man the absence of the physical body is no great deterrent.

Several experiences have been detailed in the following chapters many of them in the very words of the persons concerned. Apart from the Ashram and Adistanam at Tiruvannamalai which houses the Samadhi of Seshadri Swamigal, Adhistanams can today also be found at Coimbatore and Unjaloor, places where the Sathguru has spoken using such souls as he thinks fit. To tell the story of one other such soul.

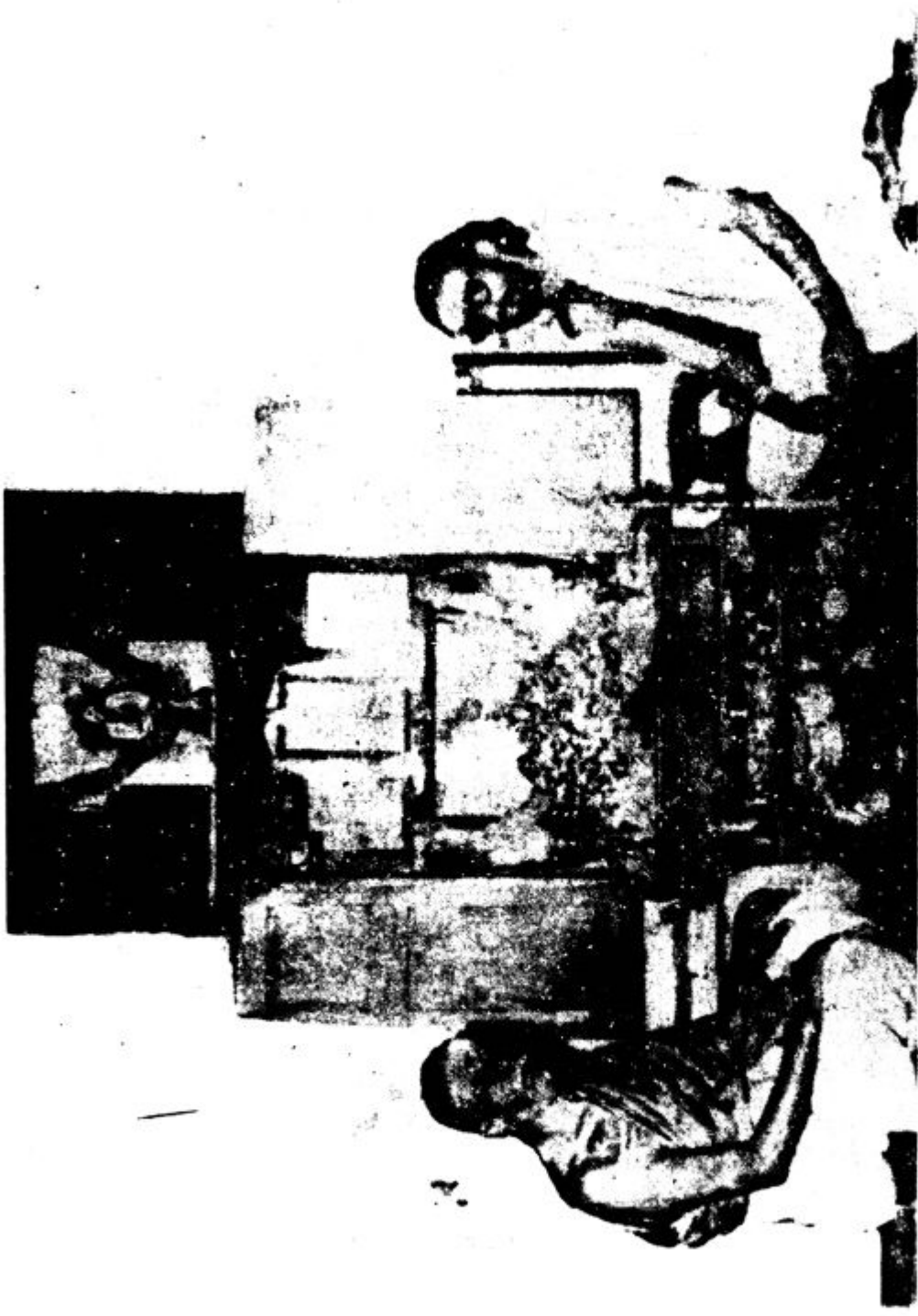
Lakshmi Narayana Sharma was born in Kanjanoor near Kumbakonam, in the Tanjore district, into a religious family. After his education he took up a job with a private company. One of his sisters Srimathi Visalakshi Swaminathan had taken upadesha in the Sri Vidya Rituals from Mr. Nagasubramanya Sastrigal and used to perform elaborate poojas every full moon. It was in her house that Mr. Sharma

first saw the picture of Seshadri Swamigal. His sister explained at length about the Mahan.

Srimathi Visalakshi's Guru, Shri Nagasubramanya Sastrigal had taken initiation from Shri Pookadai Sundara Sastri whose disksha name was Shri Atmananda. Shri Sundara Sastri had gone to Tiruvannamalai in search of Seshadri Swamigal. He was unable to see him for three days after which he had darshan of Seshadri Swamigal at the shrine of Lord Muruga at the Arunachaleswarar temple. Swami sprinkled water on his head and said that he could go, that was the upadesh for him. Shri Sundara Sastri returned to Madras and his priestly duties. One day as he had just finished conducting the 60th birthday celebrations at a house, a man called "Abat Sahaya" came to take him to Tiruvannamalai. Seshadri Swamigal wanted to see him at once. Shri Sundara Sastri left with "Abat Sahaya". There his Guru took from him the book Nityotsava which he was carrying, saying that it contained all. Going through it Shri Sundara Sastri found that it held all the guidance he needed.

It was with Shri Nagasubramanya Sastrigal and Srimathi Visalakshi Swaminathan and her family that Mr. Sharma in 1975 first visited Tiruvannamalai. Then Shri Nagasubramanya Sastrigal performed 'abishekam' at the Samadhi and started the Aradhana celebrations. The trip was an unforgettable experience for Mr. Sharma. More so because each of the past experiences were to take him closer and closer to his Guru. Indeed that was the role Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal was to now play in his life. Returning from Tiruvannamalai Mr. Sharma started performing pooja every full moon, a practice commenced in 1975 one he still continues without a break.

In 1977 during the worship one full moon night at Kanjanoor along with his younger sister Srimathi Rajeswari, Mr. Sharma seemed to go into a trance. As his sister watched she saw a vision of the Sathguru, arise from the flame of the



*Shri Nagasubramanyam Sastrigal with his Guru Shri Sundara
Sastrigal*

lamp lit for worship. From that day Seshadri Swamigal became the guiding force of Mr. Sharma's life. On the 31st of March 1977 came instructions from the Sathguru that a temple be constructed for the Mother Goddess. Following his directions an idol was found and a temple for Raja Kali Amman constructed at Thettupatti near Dindugal. Balalaya Kumbabishekam was conducted on the 8th of July 1980 aided by several prominent members of society headed by Mr. Ramamurthy, in whose house the wooden idol of the Goddess was sculpted. The main Kumbabishekam was later performed. The temple can be visited even today.

Mr. Sharma's prayer and worship continued during which he had various experiences. His whole life he had entrusted to the loving care of Shri Seshadri Swamigal who would guide him at every stage. It was in 1986 that an inexplicable sorrow welled up within Mr. Sharma. He was not doing enough for the Mahan. The emotion became more and more pronounced as he pondered long and hard on what he could do for his loving Guru, a token of gratitude for the grace bestowed. Consulting various granthas he came to understand that the only celebration allowed for Mahans was the Aradhana at the time of their Maha Samadhi. He prayed to Seshadri Swamigal for permission to conduct an Aradhana that year. First came refusal then with more prayer and persistent appeals, permission was obtained. The first Aradhana was a small affair conducted at Mr. Sharma's house.

At that time Mr. Sharma was working in a private company. One day came an order from Seshadri Swamigal; he was to leave his job and serve humanity. At this point it should be explained that from his 18th year onwards Mr. Sharma had evinced great interest in astrology including Nadi Astrology. Seshadri Swamigal's instruction was to leave a lucrative job and use this art of astrology to guide men so in need of help. Mr. Sharma had long learnt the need for complete and unquestioning surrender to his Guru. He

resigned his job the very day, though he had a wife and child to care for, secure in the knowledge that the Swami would show the way.

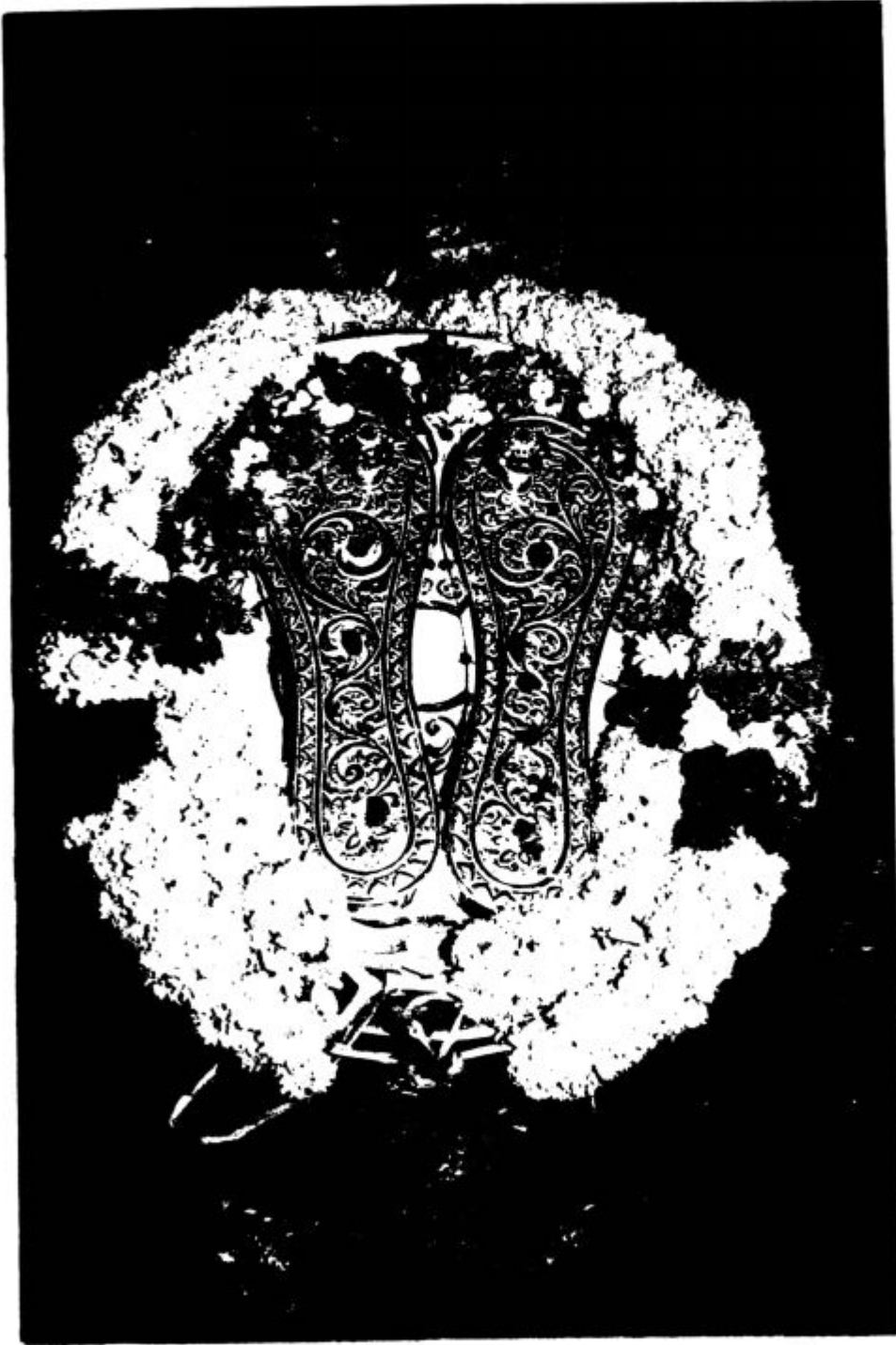
Out of a job Mr. Sharma set about organising himself. Where was he to find a place to operate from in the days of exorbitant rents and soaring land prices. Seshadri Swamigal guided him to the Anjaneya temple in Mylapore. He was instructed to approach a flower vendor there. Which Mr. Sharma did, only to be rewarded with the news that there was office space at a house near the end of the lane. The place was fixed on 2nd October 1987 the very place which houses Sri Guru Computer Jothidam even today. From here Mr. Sharma began astrological consultation's guided by Seshadri Swamigal, solving at times unsolvable tangles to the great relief of many.

Aradhana's were conducted every year. The celebrations which had begun on a small scale in a house grew from strength to strength and soon large wedding halls were being utilised for the purpose. The Sathguru insisted that 'Annadhanam' be conducted on a large scale, which is done every year without fail. The Aradhana concludes, as instructed, with the Devi Thirukalyanam. To propagate the ideals of Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal a trust was formed in 1991. It was proposed that a Brindavanam be constructed. Along with Shrines for the Mother Goddess where the Sri Vidya traditions are to be preserved, will be shrines for prescribed deities and siddhars. Welfare schemes like poor feeding, a home for the destitute, medical facilities allopathic and siddha for the economically backward are also envisaged. The teachings and ideals of the Mahan as well as his blessings and guidance will from here be made available to society. The project on the anvil is a golden opportunity for sincere disciples to offer what ever best they can, to serve society in their turn.

Reading the past few pages varied emotions would no doubt have crossed reader's minds. Where is the proof that



Aradhana Celebrations for the Sathguru



The Golden Padukas of Shri Seshadri Swamigal

Seshadri Swamigal actually guides man even today. While the following chapters will detail several more tales of gratitude let me begin with what Mr. V. Balasubramaniam of Chittlapakkam near Madras has to say.

"By the grace of the Sathguru and the divine mother, I was blessed to have the opportunity to hear of the life of Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal at a very young age itself. I was again blessed with a chance to hear his discourse while he spoke through the late Sri Sivaramakrishnan at Coimbatore. Since then he has been the guiding force in my life. I would like to share with the readers my personal experience of the unbound 'Karunai' (Mercy) of Shri Seshadri Swamigal. My youngest son Venkatakrisnan was about seven years old. He had a problem with his teeth. One tooth would become black and start receding day by day till it totally dissolved. Soon another would start. In this way the boy lost quite a few teeth. Several medicines suggested by different dentists were tried but none had any effect. We were very worried about this situation. Then Shri Seshadri Swamigal through his 'Sookshma Pravesam' advised me to give my son, every morning on an empty stomach, a glass of buttermilk with half a lemon squeezed into it and a little lime (equal to the weight of a paddy grain) dissolved. This treatment was tried, from the third day the blackening of the teeth stopped and the fallen teeth also grew back as healthy ones. Now my son is fifteen and has had till today, no problem with his teeth. Such is the grace of the Sathguru. This event happened when I was working in Kumbakonam".

The above incident narrates in a disciple's very own words, the guidance and blessings received in recent times from the Sathguru. Many more such occurrences have been described in the chapters to follow. Seshadri Swamigal continues to help man in his endeavour to cross this ocean that is life.

GOLDEN PADUKAS

Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal attained Maha samadhi in 1929, yet as the years passed disciples became aware that the Sathguru was eternally present, lighting the dway for man. The late Mr. Rangrajan, who was well-versed in the 'Lakshana Sastra' of the renowned sage Vararuchi had met Mr. Sharma wanting to pass on his art to him. During this association there were instructions from Shri Seshadri Swamigal that Mr. Rangarajan make a pair of Padukas for the Sathguru. It must be mentioned here that Mr. Rangarajan had memorized the Paduka Sahasram, a great work of a 1000 verses, by the saint Ramanuja, on the glory of Padukas. No sooner than the instructions were received, Mr. Rangarajan made a couple of Padukas in wood and offered them to the Sathguru.

Readers of Indian epics, need no introduction to the exalted status that padukas have always had. Bharata's penance before Lord Rama's padukas, when the latter left his kingdom for his sojourn in the forest is well known. The padukas took the place of the Lord himself. Down the ages the worship of padukas and its glory only increased. Says Ramanuja in the Paduka Sahasram.

मणिपादुकशेर्युगं मुरारेः
मम नित्यं विदधातु मङ्गलानि ।
अधिकृत्य चराचरस्य रक्षां
अनुकंपाक्षमयोरिवावतारः ॥

*Manipadukayuryugam Murarehe
Mam nithyam Vidhatathu mangalani
Adhikritya characharasya raksham
Anukampakshmyorivavtharah.*

For the protection of the entire universe,

To read Vedanta Desikar in place of Ramanuja

As if blessings and patience have incarnated,
The beautiful pair of padukas of my beloved Lord
Vishnu,
May them always bless and keep me.

The Padukas which Mr. Rangarajan offered to the Sathguru was placed for worship at the 1990 Aradhana celebrations. While the 'abishekam' was being performed a thought flashed through Mr. Sharma's mind. It was an inspiration, to make the Padukas in gold, a token offering at the feet of the Sathguru. Even as the thought passed through his mind Mr. Sharma made an announcement over the microphone to the devotees gathered to participate in the festivities. golden Padukas would be made for the next Aradhana. The response was immediate, Mrs. Jayalakshmi Shankara Narayanan took off a golden bangle that adorned her wrist and placed it silently on the Sathguru's Padukas. Powerful emotions filled her heart as she trustingly and whole heartedly made her offering. As if on cue a number of others followed suit. Rings, chains, bangles devotees were only too eager to contribute towards the worthy cause of making golden padukas for Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal.

Mr. Laxmikanthan vice chairman, Brindavanam Trust took the responsibility of getting the padukas crafted. Chola Jewellery worked hard, taking no charge for the labour and created a lovely design. At this juncture there was a shortage of silver Mr. Rammurthy and his wife Uma Ramamurthy immediately volunteered to help overcome this shortfall, they would contribute the silver. With the loving contributions from faithful devotees the Padukas were made. Made in silver covered in gold and tastefully embellished with jewels, the beautiful creation was satisfactorily completed. Silver coins, dipped in gold were also made to worship the Padukas with.

The Padukas were installed during the 1991 Aradhana. A Gaja Pooja was conducted, with an elephant offering worship to the sacred Padukas, followed by devotees. It must be said in this connection that those devotees who had prayed for some problem to be solved, all had their prayers answered. After the solemn celebrations the Padukas were taken out in a procession. As Mr. Sharma placed his Guru's foot wear on his head the heavens seemed to open up to send their blessings. A slight drizzle began and then Mr. Sharma had a vision of an immensely happy Seshadri Swamigal laughing as though in immeasurable bliss. The Sathguru was expressing his pleasure over the untarnished ardor of his disciples. From then on a picture of the golden padukas adorns many a prayer room, the object of much adulation and reverence.

Mr. Anantharaman narrates his personal experience. "I am narrating an incident from my life as testimony to Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal's grace. Three months back my family approached Mr. Sharma for his guidance. He then warned us after going through the horoscopes, that there would be considerable medical expenses to be incurred before the end of the year. At that time we did not take it seriously but in November we received a message from BITS Pilani where my son is studying stating that he had accidentally consumed mercury chloride and was in a critical condition. We rushed to Pilani and found our son in an unconscious state. After initial treatment at New Delhi, he was shifted to Apollo Hospitals Madras. One day when my wife could take the tension no more she rushed to Mr. Sharma for the Sathguru's guidance. Mr. Sharma not being available she placed an offering on the golden Padukas and prayed hard for Seshadri Swamigal's help. She returned to the hospital in a calmer frame of mind, to hear the news that our son was recovering. Mr. Sharma when told of the accident immediately uttered that by the Sathguru's grace my son would be alright and would complete his studies. After

3 weeks of treatment his health was restored to normal. The entire expenditure involved was more than a lakh.

The above incident shows how the Sathguru's words have come true and how he helped us at a critical phase of life."

To the Sathguru's many disciples, worship of his Padukas has become a form of prayer that gives them untold peace and satisfaction. Several offer prayers specially on full moon nights, the time best suited for Guru Poojas. The Sathguru ever ready to respond to even the smallest display of adoration, showers his blessings upon his devotees.

To the disciples of Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal his golden padukas are a treasure incomparable, a rare achievement.

Chapter No. 16

SUPREME SURRENDER

Mr. N. Ramakrishnan today resides in Pallavaram near Madras along with his family. He is the great nephew of Seshadri Swamigal, the grandson of Narasimha Joshiar younger brother of the Sathguru. In his house, reverentially placed in a little cradle, is the small idol of Krishna, the "Thavazhum Krishnan", referred to in chapter 2. That very idol, depicting a baby Krishna, crawling, holding butter in one hand, which Seshadri Swamigal worshipped with such devotion as a small boy. To disciples it is a priceless treasure. No less a person than the Paramacharya Chandrasekhara Swamigal, the head of the Kanchi Math kept the idol and offered prayers before it with great reverence for 15 days. A little necklace with which he adorned Krishna still lies around his neck.

Mr. Ramakrishnan has an interesting tale to narrate about the idol. In 1968 Mrs. Ramakrishnan was critical in a hospital following complications in child birth. The doctors had no hope of her survival, they had even set a deadline. That night as Mr. Ramakrishnan tried to find sleep, his baby daughter Indu beside him, he felt as if some one had slapped him. He then saw Seshadri Swamigal tell him that Krishna was in a rice bin, restore him to the proper place and all would be well. Mr. Ramakrishnan left immediately for Kumbakonam and the family home. His mother while shifting, had packed up a lot of household articles and along with it had placed the baby Krishna in a rice bin for safe keeping, until an appropriate place could be found. There he had been for a few years now. Remembering this Mr. Ramakrishnan as per the Sathguru's instructions located the missing Krishna and restored him to his rightful place in the prayer room at his home in Madras. Mrs. Ramakrishnan recovered at once to the great surprise and relief of all and

contrary to doctor's predictions delivered a perfectly healthy baby boy, who today is an engineer.

The family of Mr. Ramakrishnan, wife, married daughter, son-in-law and two sons are all dedicated to Shri Seshadri Swamigal who is their eternal companion. They live today in a house situated beside a hill exactly as the Sathguru had earlier said they would. Mr. Ramakrishnan recounts how the baby boy Srinivas had a speech defect. Even at five the boy was unable to speak coherently. Sitting before a picture of Seshadri Swamigal one day, he gave vent to his unhappiness. Within a week the baby boy started speaking as clearly as any other. He also narrates how when the Sathguru lay ill at Tiruvannamalai, Narasimhan, Seshadri Swamigal's younger brother rushed from Madras to see him. He ran up to the Sathguru with the cry 'Anna' meaning brother. The ailing Sathguru responded by picking up a stick and beating Narasimhan on the head. He had long cut off all relationships. He was a sannyasi. His detachment was beyond compare.

Tears well up in the man's eyes as he talks about Seshadri Swamigal, his greatness and the grace he continually bestows. He recalled with some emotion how he had been in the past unhappy about the lack of proper celebrations of Aradhanas for the Sathguru. At one such time Seshadri Swamigal consoled him saying that the time would come when great festivities would be conducted. To Mr. Ramakrishnan it now seemed the time had indeed come. The sincerity is evident as is the devotion. His wife is devoted to Krishna. She can stay away from her children not from Krishna. A simple family that lives by the light of the Mahan.

Disciples continue to experience the presence of the Sathguru in ever so many ways. To read what some of them have to say.

Mr. Nagarajan a banker, now at Vellore, had been married ten years, yet he had no children. Medical consultations proved futile as did dedicated prayers. It was at this juncture that Mrs. Nagarajan desired to visit Guru Computer Jothidam at the instance of her sister. Mr. Nagarajan however had, had enough, he was not prepared to seek any more advice on the question of children, he considered it an exercise in futulity. He was eventually persuaded to attend the 1988 Aradhana of Shri Seshadri Swamigal where he first met Mr. Sharma. He received as the Sathguru's prasad, some raisins. He later had astrological consultations with Mr. Sharma. Mr. Nagarajan felt strangely drawn to the place. From here also came the pleasing divine verdict that the couple would have a child. Mr. Nagarajan was at that time posted at Madras. In April 1989 came the instruction from the Sathguru that he was to at once seek a transfer out of Madras. The effort was to be made, he would be allowed to go without a hitch. Apprehensive Mr. Nagarajan approached his seniors, he was transferred to Coimbatore the next day. Mr. Nagarajan and wife arrived complete with baggage in Coimbatore anxious about residential accomodation. They need not have worried. By the grace of the Sathguru they were soon comfortably ensconsed in a convenient house. In July 1989 a pooja was performed at the residence and in August 1989 Mrs. Nagarajan conceived. Instructions came to take special care of the wife, so that no harm would come to the foetus within. Sacred ashes of the Sathguru where to be applied every morning and night. The fifth month of gestation, Mrs. Nagarajan woke up one night with pain shooting through her body. She feared she was going to loose her child. Then she had a vision of Seshadri Swamigal beside her, soothing her head, reminding her to apply the sacred ash which she had indeed forgotten that night. The baby was safe. In June 1990 Mrs. Nagarajan gave birth to a beautiful baby girl to the astonishment of the medical team. Astonished because there

was, growing with the baby a huge cyst which would normally have made even conception impossible. The child as per the Sathguru's instructions was named Bhagyalakshmi Deepika she is a sprightly four year old today.

To this couple dedicated to Shri Seshadri Swamigal and initiated disciples, the Guru's grace has made a tangible difference in their lives. Their experiences are many and their gratitude total.

Mr. Nagarajan was travelling to Polur by bus one day in 1990. Seated up front, the vehicle was fast approaching Polur. Suddenly Mr. Nagarajan felt a voice in his ear urging him to get up from his seat. So urgent was the whisper that he got up without thinking and moved a few steps back. His seat was immediately taken by another. At that moment the bus crashed into an oncoming vehicle, and chaos prevailed. Mr. Nagarajan's clothes were stained with blood. But he was not injured. Mr. Nagarajan was dumbfounded to see that the passenger who had taken his seat was grievously injured. Had he continued to sit there he would have been the one in that pitiable state. Mr. Nagarajan alighted, his heart filled with gratitude to his Guru who had saved his life, his lips uttering a prayer of thanks giving, for this providential escape. He had escaped unscathed from an accident which had wounded several. His clothes were soaked with the blood of the passenger before him, he himself was unhurt. Even today his lips tremble with emotion when he recalls the incident and expresses his total surrender to the Sathguru. The couple are eternally beholden to Shri Seshadri Swamigal for brightening up their lives, for his infinite compassion and care. They are exemplary in their faith and spirit of surrender, the Sathguru bestows his boundless love on them.

Mr. C.R. Subramaniam was facing grave problems in purchasing a house. He had made the requisite payment in 1988. It was 1992 and no flat had been sanctioned. He could

neither recover the money nor could he get his house. Distraught by the prevelant confusion Mr. Subramaniam prayed in earnestness to Seshadri Swamigal and approached Mr. Sharma for advice. There after following the instructions received he was able to take possession of a flat in November 1992. He requested Mr. Sharma to choose the date for the house warming. Came the Sathguru's instruction that the ceremony be performed early the next morning. Determined to follow the advice Mr. Subramaniam hurriedly made the necessary arrangements and the rituals were completed on schedule. Four months after came a gruelling test. The apartment did not meet with certain M.M.D.A. requirements and so was to be knocked down. The demolishing squad worked on the flat next door bringing it down. They then entered the Subramaniam house and ordered that all valuables be removed, their house was to be the next. The anguish of the family can well be imagined. At that moment of trail the family enmasse prayed in desperation to Seshadri Swamigal frantically seeking help from the gracious Sathguru. What transpired was hard to explain. The very men who had come prepared to knock down the house, departed quietly saying that they were going to leave the house alone. The family could hardly believe their eyes. The Sathguru it seems had caused this change in the men's minds; the house was safe. The house still stands today, the family continues to live there, ever grateful to the merciful Seshadri Swamigal for his loving care.

Mr. Sridhar a bank officer and initiated disciple of the Sathguru is also the Secretary of Shri Seshadri Swamigal Brindavanam Trust. He was appointed secretary as per the instructions of the Sathguru. Having heard about Seshadri Swamigal from a young age from his grand father, greater contact came when Mr. Sridhar visited Guru Computer Jothidam and became acquainted with Mr. Sharma. In his own words, "On seeing the portrait of the Sathguru at

Mr. Sharma's office, I was immediately attracted by the motherly affection flowing through his eyes. When I enquired about him, Mr. Sharma told me that he was the guiding force for his astrological profession and also his mentor for his philosophical life. He told me that implicit faith and obedience with total surrender to his lotus feet shall pave the way for the future. He also advised me to keep one path open and take one Guru so that there may not be any hindrance to my spiritual path. He directed me to visit Tiruvannamalai, the sacred place and to pray at the Sathguru Sri Seshadri Swamigal Adhistanam after performing Giri Pradakshinam and Guru Puja for Sathguru. As directed by Mr. Sharma I conveyed all my desires to the Sathguru during the year 1990 and thereafter my life has undergone several changes to my satisfaction. I can narrate a few of my experiences for information.

Blessed with a House :

When I was preparing my application for availment of a loan, to purchase a house, one of my friends noticed a defect in the housing plan which might not be acceptable to the loan sanctioning authority. I went to the contractor who got the plan approved and informed him of the snag and requested him to get it corrected. He told me that it was difficult to get it corrected by them as it might take a much longer time due to formalities. He however assured me that he would consult his engineer and do the needful. I immediately contacted Mr. Sharma for his guidance. He told me that the Sathguru had directed me to pray to the Goddess Bhuvaneswari. I started chanting the mantras of Bhuvaneswari as directed by the Sathguru and left to Him the fate of my house. Suddenly the contractor came to my house and informed me that the plan was corrected without much difficulty. He was astonished at the way it was done so fast. With the grace of the Sathguru, I was able to avail the loan and purchase a house.

Saved from theft

It was a Sunday morning, I went to my Bank at Mandaveli to draw my salary. After getting cash for Rs.2,000/- I had kept it in my brief case along with other documents. On reaching my house, after stopping at a couple of places. I was shocked to find that my brief case was missing. I was much worried about the monetary loss since I had already been informed by Mr. Sharma about the adverse position of planets in my horoscope. He had also advised me to be careful with my belongings. With grief, I pleaded with the Sathguru for his grace. With a heavy heart, I again went to Mylapore and enquired at every place which I had visited. Finally I went to the hotel where I had taken coffee, without much hope. I enquired of the manager of the hotel, about the brief case. The manager asked me for identification without saying anything. After satisfying himself, he gave me the brief case and informed me that the box was given to him by one of the visitors. After seeing the box intact, I was overwhelmed with joy. I was saved from theft by the grace of the Sathguru. This is proof that if Mahan desires, even adverse position of planets need not have any influence on us.

Escape from road accident

"It was a Saturday evening around 7 p.m. I was returning with my wife from West Mambalam on a scooter to my residence at Maddipakkam. Before starting any journey, it is my habit to pray to the Sathguru for protection. When we approached the Mambalam subway, the back wheel of the scooter suddenly separated from the axle and the scooter was running on one wheel. Since brakes are connected to the wheel, I could not stop the vehicle by applying the brakes. After a struggle, I stopped the vehicle with great difficulty. To my surprise, my wife and I were saved without a scratch. My wife was able to get down without much inconvenience. A group of four persons rushed

and lifted the vehicle to a nearby shop and within few minutes, set right the vehicle. When I asked them about their labour charges, they refused to take any money for the service rendered by them. I could not believe my eyes when I saw such labourers who volunteered to do an excellent job within few minutes without expecting any return out for it. It was due to the grace of the Sathguru that I escaped unhurt from the accident."

Mr. and Mrs. Uma Ramamurthy a pious and religious couple have both accepted Seshadri Swamigal as their Guru and taken initiation. Through Mr. Sharma they first heard of the Sathguru and later came to see for themselves, his presence in their lives. They recall how before this total surrender, the conflict of whether a Guru was actually needed or not, tore their minds. The answer seemed to come from an explanation by the Paramacharya of the Kanchi Mutt in a discourse published in a Tamil magazine, Kalki, elaborated in Chapter 20. From then on they became devoted to Seshadri Swamigal. In their own words. "It now dawned on us that there is an easy path for salvation. Let us surrender ourselves at His lotus feet and look towards Him for guidance. The feeling that our Guru is behind us gives us tremendous power and total mental peace."

"We would like to narrate an incident in this connection". In the words of Mr. Ramamurthy. "My job situation suddenly became uncertain due to which I felt that I should resign and leave Madras for a better job. This gave me a lot of mental agony and I submitted myself at the lotus feet of Gurunathar for guidance. I decided to continue whatever happened, till I got His message. Within a short time the job situation became better and now I am comfortably settled in the same job. During this time my wife also went through a very difficult phase; She was more upset than I was. Who is there except Gurunathar to guide us. One night she experienced a bright light coming towards her, in the middle of

which Gurunathar was seated. Within a week she also got the chance to visit His Samadhi at Tiruvannamalai."

The incidents narrated in these Chapters contain tales of gratitude to a loving Sathguru who cared for those who trusted him in their times of need. As is in keeping with the teachings of Seshadri Swamigal he also laid much emphasis on the spiritual growth of those who trusted in him. Where his name is uttered in sincere devotion there to this day he is present, the light burns on.

Chapter No. 17

UNTOLD TALES

Mr. S. Muthuveeru, (retired) chief engineer highways and rural works describes an episode that deeply touched his heart.

"In spite of all our efforts to settle the marriage alliance of my son for more than two years, even after handling about 500 horoscopes, the marriage could not be finalised. I then approached the divine astrologer Thiru. Sharma with a broken heart and asked him whether my son would get married. He suggested that I participate with sincere prayers in the Thirukalyana Archana at the Sathguru's Aradhana'92. My wife and I discussed about his suggestion and decided to do as asked. The next day after praying for the Swamigal's blessings I made a payment for the Thirukalyanam and returned home. To my great surprise after I reached home I received a telephone call as detailed below. The bride's party had verified the horoscopes of their daughter and my son and were very much satisfied. They would be happy to have an alliance with our family. They would send the girl's horoscope by post and if we were satisfied the marriage could be finalised. Our joy knew no bounds on learning this and were thankful to Swamigal for his kindness towards us.

After due verification of the horoscopes by the divine astrologer Thiru. Sharma the go ahead was obtained. In the course of talks there was a near break down, yet Mr. Sharma clarified that the Sathguru's indications were that the same marriage would take place. The same night there was a call from the bride's party; the bottle necks had been removed and the marriage finalised. By the grace of the Sathguru the couple were happily married".

Mr. Raghavan who works with Madras Telephones is a philanthropist who has constructed a hall for

conducting the last rituals, for the convenience of society. In 1993 fifty year old Mr. Raghavan fell ill. He had a problem with his spinal chord and could neither sit nor stand without excruciating pain. Medical intervention did nothing to relieve this agony. Surgery was recommended. At this juncture Mr. Laxmikanthan, Vice-Chairman of the Sathguru's Brindavanam Trust took Mr. Raghavan's horoscope to Mr. Sharma for scrutiny. According to indications in October '93 a Ganapathy Homam was conducted with the help of Mr. Laxmikantan, S. Balasubramaniam and other trust members, as was a Saneeswara Santhi. After the poojas were conducted medical opinion was again sought. No surgery was required said the first doctor. A second opinion confirmed the verdict. Today Mr. Raghavan is a well man. None of the discomforts remain. He moves around without a problem and even rides a vehicle. He is ever indebted to Sathguru Seshadri Swamigal for his timely help.

Mr. Narayanan from Annanagar consulted Mr. Sharma for varied problems that he was facing. There he heard of Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal and started praying to him with faith. Remedial measures were suggested and followed. Mr. Narayanan had hitherto had severe problems with his superiors at work. To the extent that he desired to opt for voluntary retirement and leave the job. After the entry of the Sathguru into his life however, things evened out. The problems on the work front ceased and with it all thoughts of an early retirement. He is happy today in the same job with all the benefits he thought he would not receive. Mr. Narayanan experienced the Sathguru's grace again when he passed through severe financial crisis before his daughter's marriage. Entrusting all to Seshadri Swamigal he was able to complete the same without any struggle.

Mr. Venkataraman lives in Mulund Bombay. In October 1992 he met Mr. Sharma in Bombay. His second son had returned from the States with a severe eye defect and drastic loss of vision. The American medical opinion was that

nothing could be done to help the boy. According to the Sathguru's instructions a Homam was conducted. Soon following surgery done at a hospital in Madras the defect was rectified and the boy recovered his lost vision by the blessings of the Mahan, to the extreme relief of the family, now for ever indebted to him.

Mr. G. Arunachalam lives in Coimbatore. He describes how the Sathguru came to his aid at a difficult time in his life. Mr. Arunachalam lived in a rented house. One day his child while playing, accidentally broke some newly constructed structure in the house. The house owner was furious and ordered them to vacate at once. No amount of apologies would placate the man. As Mr. Arunachalam lay worried that night he felt some one touch his head. A feeling of immense peace filled his mind. He saw the vision of a saint tell him "You are my disciple. You are coming to me. Do not worry you will soon get a house that faces the east". Mr. Arunachalam was greatly relieved, a little surprised. He continued with his house hunting and within a week found a house. He opened the door and entered only to find a picture in the empty house, of the saint in the vision, Seshadri Swamigal. The house owner was a staunch disciple of the Sathguru. On closer examination Mr. Arunachalam found that the house was indeed east facing. He then thanked the Mahan from Tiruvannamalai, the city of his birth, for coming to his help at a crucial time.

Mr. T.R. Nagarajan a chemical engineer returned home from the middle east in 1991. For various reasons he found it impossible to settle down in India. At the same time he was unable to go abroad. At that juncture he met Mr. Sharma and from then on his faith in Seshadri Swamigal grew. In a few months things sorted out and to his great relief and peace of mind he found a good posting in Malaysia. Today he remains a faithful disciple of the Sathguru who's compassion guided him through a critical phase in life.

Many disciples who worship the Sathguru with hearts full of faith have felt His presence in various ways. Uma Bharani became an initiated disciple of Seshadri Swamigal on March 18th 1993 after having earlier met Mr. Sharma. A month later she visited Tiruvannamalai, with her family. In her words, "The day was a full moon one. We started for Girivalam at 3 O'clock in the morning. After we crossed the city limits we all experienced the beautiful fragrance of roses, incense sticks and strange blossoms which is indescribable. When I was lighting camphor at the gate of the Sathguru's Ashrama wave of fragrance of Vibuthi enveloped me. I was too stunned to even put a foot forward. After returning from Tiruvannamalai, one night at prayer time the same perfume of vibuthi was felt by both me and my husband. From that day on I increased my prayer and meditation. Two months later as I sat in my prayer room reading a religious book my child asleep beside me, I suddenly saw some one watching me through the window. He resembled Seshadri Swamigal. He stood there looking at me and my child. Though my conscience told me that this was my Guru, I closed the window in fear. Later when my husband came home. I told him about the experience. He scolded me for closing the windows and immediately opened them. After half an hour my 2 year old child suddenly woke up and said, "see Amma Seshadri Swamigal, Seshadri Swamigal." The incident made a great impact on my life and I vowed then to give my heart and soul to my Guru Shri Seshadri Swamigal.

Mr. Varma a Marketing Consultant, and an initiated disciple, in October 1993 had a medical problem. The likelihood of this problem arising had earlier been predicted by Mr. Sharma. An enlargement of the prostate. An almost emergency situation arose on 15th Oct. 1993, when after a long car drive the passage of urine was blocked almost entirely. Immediate medical advice recommended surgery. However the message from the Sathguru was that surgery

would not be required, a simple procedure would suffice. And so it turned out to be. After due consultations Mr. Sharma indicated that the best time for the procedure TURP to be done was between 7.15 and 9 in the morning. The doctors finding that unsuitable, the next best option was selected, a time after 9. On the morning of surgery were frantic calls from the theatre asking for the patient to be wheeled in by seven fifteen. No one could understand why but the patient was quickly readied and taken in. He was in the theatre at the time indicated as best though even the surgeon was unaware why the patient was brought in so early. In the words of Mr. Varma, "before being taken to the theatre proper I was left alone in the passage leading to it. Having been wheeled in early there was a long wait ahead. I was chanting the sloka of Seshadri Swamigal and never felt like I was alone. I had no fear or tension normal under the circumstances. I could feel the presence of the Sathguru near me". The procedure successfully over the date of discharge was fixed. The evening prior to the date of discharge there was some unexpected confusion over the test results. Some more blood tests were needed. At that moment when tension prevailed came a call from Mr. Sharma who was then in Pondicherry. The Sathguru had indicated that there would be some temporary trouble due to blood transfusion. Nothing to be worried about. All would be well. The family breathed easy. Soon came the doctor's clarification, everything was in order, there was no cause for worry. Mr. Varma was discharged from hospital, completely well. As vowed, an abishekam was performed for the Sathguru at Tiruvannamalai the very next day.

Mr. V. Kalidas a teacher at Ammasathram Tirubuvam writes "Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal blessed me in the year 1974-75 when I was at Tiruvannamalai. With the blessing of Shri Bala Murugan Swamigal of Tirukoilur I could feel the presence of the Sathguru. From that day the Sathguru started guiding me through all phases of life. I feel

his company at all times, he is the completeness in everything. The experiences which I have daily in life are beyond all possible comprehension of the human brain”.

To conclude this chapter with an incident from Mr. Sharma's life. His first child was a baby girl Bhuvaneswari. After a gap of several years, Mrs. Sharma conceived. The Sathguru then said that if the child was born there would be a danger to Mr. Sharma's life. According to his Guru's instructions Mr. Sharma made the necessary offerings at the prescribed temple. While he prayed at the temple, his wife had a miscarriage. The danger was averted.

Later on came another conception. One week before the due date came instructions from the Sathguru that the cord was twined around the baby's neck. Certain divine remedies were suggested and immediately performed. The scan however showed no such complications. The incision was made for the cesarian delivery of the baby. The attending gyneacologist rushed out of the theatre for a word with Mr. Sharma, the cord was indeed wound round the child's neck, how did he know ? If there had been even a moments delay they would have lost the child. The Sathguru's ways are beyond human comprehension, the baby was delivered a lovely baby boy Vasudevan who is an adorable three year old today.

Not knowing how to answer sceptics about the guidance the Sathguru gave, Mr. Sharma during meditation once asked Seshadri Swamigal how to convince doubters that the Sathguru was present behind his every deed. “Look at the clock”, said the Sathguru. The time was then 9.50. The two needles big and small seemed to merge conveying the impression that there was just one needle. “Can any one deny that there are two?” asked the Swami. The point was clear. The real situation could be appreciated only on close scrutiny the initial conflict can be removed with deeper understanding.

Chapter No. 18

GIFTS OF MERCY

Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal's mercy is so boundless; the occasions when he rushed to his disciples' and are countless. To narrate all of them would be to attempt the impossible. Yet some more have been included here .

Mr. P. Ganesh and his family went through a trying time out of which they were able to come unscathed thanks to the Sathguru's mercy. Mr. Ganesh while playing a game of cricket was hit on the right knee by the cricket ball. He was brought home in an unconscious state and at once rushed to hospital. Not showing any signs of improvement he was then shifted to a better equipped hospital in Madras. There again the doctors were unable to diagnose the actual problem. All that they could say was that the boy was critical. Again he was shifted, this time to another hospital, where he was in the intensive care for 25 days, in a coma. In despair Mr. Sharma was contacted, the Sathguru's help was badly needed. Mr. Sharma gave the family a picture of the Mahan to be placed beside the bed and sacred ashes offered to the Sathguru to be given to the boy. Also came the comforting message that Ganesh would be alright and back home soon. Certain remedies were prescribed, poojas to be done. Everything was done with implicit faith by the family and Ganesh was brought back home on the 36th day, fully recovered to the utter relief of the family. They are as they themselves say ever indebted to Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal.

What follows is the tale of a young girl trying to make her life, despite grave problems and the help extended by the Sathguru to give her a peaceful life. Names have been withheld for obvious reasons.

"For a very long time my parents were on the look out for a suitable match for me. After several years I finally got married in the month of April 1991 to a well to do person. The

first month of married life passed happily. Then there was a misunderstanding. Also I was in the family way. For me it was a happy moment but for my in-laws it was bad news. They did not want me to keep the baby. With the help of well wishers I got out of the house. I came to my parent's house and met my Guru Mr.K.V.L.N. Sharma. He showed me a way. I was bed ridden for a year. Doctors gave up hope of my having a child. But I had great faith in Seshadri Swamigal and finally my wish was fulfilled. I had a lovely baby boy. It would not have been possible without my Guru's guidance and Shri.Seshadri Swamigal's grace". The disciple who wrote the article has now remarried and is happy, settled in life.

Dr.Jeyaram an expert in the field of Siddha medicine writes "Unless blessed by Siddar's the secret recipes contained in the Aushata and Kalpam as expounded by Guru Dakshinamoorthy are extremely hard to prepare. As are elixir's which are conducive to the preservation of health and prolongation of the life span. A master medicine 'Muppu' is the key to unlock the treasure house of several other preparations. Every sidda doctor strives to prepare these medicines. I too endeavoured hard for 7 years but found one factor or the other hindering work. The wonderful truth is that after I came into association with Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal through Mr.Sharma., I successfully completed the preparation of one master medicine. With this among other things the potency of medicines can be multiplied many more times, to cure even chronic diseases. Further more my financial position has also improved well to sustain further research work."

"Last but no less important, the Sathguru has accomodated me under his canopy of grace and blessing by giving me a place under the Sathguru's trust office a place I acquired after struggling for one year without suitable accomodation. I firmly believe that this is a blessing from the Sathguru who also has still greater things in store for me."

Mr. Ved Prakash Kishnani recalls an experience with his Guru. "I am a business man having a close relation with respected K.V.L.N. Sharma sir. I attended the Aradhana last year and got closely involved with the blessing of Seshadri Swamigal. I was to buy a New vehicle a 'Tata sierra' and I promised to take delivery of the same at Thiruvannamalai. I took delivery of the vehicle at Madras but could not go over to Thiruvannamalai due to pressure of work. The first month after the vehicle came it had a major accident, the next month another and another. Three accidents one after the other. I met Mr. Sharma and asked the reason for these mishaps. Then he reminded me of my promise to go to Tiruvannamalai and do 'abishekam' for the Swami.

We all left soon for Tiruvannamalai stayed overnight and offered Pooja. We returned to Madras and since then there has not even been one scratch on the car. This made me realise the presence of the Sathguru and the need to remember that he is always with us."

Mr. Laxmikanthan, vice chairman Brindavanam Trust narrates. "The Sathguru's grace and divine rulings are beyond description. People have to learn about this from their own experiences. I will attempt with his guidance to try and write as best as I can about my experience. My association with Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal began in 1959-60 when I first visited Tiruvannamalai with my colleagues, and visited his Adhistanam. After that whenever I went to Tiruvannamalai I would not return without visiting his Ashram. From the first time I went there I had the sensation of his having taken me into his keeping. I soon decided that only he could guide me to this path. But it was only in 1989 that I got his blessings. Through a friend I had the opportunity to attend for the first time the Aradhana Celebrations of the Mahan and to meet Mr. Sharma. From then on I moved very closely with him and became absorbed in the worship of the Sathguru. I also became deeply involved along with

Mr. Sharma in conducting the annual Aradhana celebrations. As I became more and more absorbed in the worship of the Sathguru I had also to go through severe tests. My normally healthy father fell very ill with obstructive jaundice. Thanks to the Sathguru's grace he gradually recovered with treatment. Unhappy that he could not attend his grand daughter's wedding, (my sister's daughter's wedding) he again took ill. The day prior to the wedding I had the hapless task of admitting him to an intensive care unit in a hospital. The next day the wedding took place though to me it hardly, under the conditions, seemed like one. The day the bride was to be sent to her husband's home my father was critical in a coma. Doctors gave up all hope they tried to do their best yet opined that it was no use keeping him in hospital. He had at best a couple of hours to live, we were to take him home. Accordingly I brought him home at three, a motionless body with just the last breaths passing. The house was crowded with people drowned in grief. It was at this moment that the Sathguru created some extraordinary strength in my mind. I asked Mr. Sharma for advice to tide over the situation. Guided by the Sathguru, Mr. Sharma himself unflustered helped me stay calm and assured me that nothing but prayers to the lotus feet of the Sathguru would help. He advised me to forget the situation and seek his help, the situation, could be over come. So saying he urged me to pray fervently to the Sathguru. I had a wash and from 4 in the evening sat in earnest prayer surrendering myself entirely to my Guru. It was six next morning when I came out of the prayer room. The motionless figure of my father stirred. Slowly he opened his eyes and looked at me, then he moved his hands and legs. It seemed to me to be a gesture of thanks giving to a merciful Guru who had brought him back from the jaws of death. There can be no more astonishing incident than this one. All the relatives and friends who had gathered were happy at my father's recovery; the doctors were confounded. The Sathguru's blessings had baffled medical science and changed the fate of

a life. Mr. Sharma gave me the strength to worship the Sathguru and showed the way to get his divine grace. To show us the way in our moments of need the Sathguru has given us Mr. Sharma.

I desired to conduct the 'sathabishekam' for my father. He too very much wanted this since no one in his family had lived to be 80. Thanks to the Sathguru I was able to fulfill his wish and conducted the first 80th birthday celebrations in our family. My father lived seven months past his 80th birthday and died peacefully thereafter. The Sathguru is everything in my life, he verily runs it."

There is another instance where Shri Seshadri Swamigal voluntarily blessed a lady, Vasantha Seshadri, whose grandfather had been his devotee. In her words "I was not married in 1974. One Friday morning I had a vision of Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal. I was then not even his great disciple. I was very much devoted to Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Ramana Maharishi. I was even a little scared of the Sathguru. Yet in the dream he chased me and said that he would take care of me. He also gave me a mantra. After this incident I married a person with the Sathguru's name. From then whenever I have had bad times Seshadri Swamigal has always taken care.

Music director Krishna Teja had promised lyricist Mr. Bharani and disciple of the Sathguru that he would accompany him to see Mr. Sharma. Some music had to be composed for bajans written in praise of Seshadri Swamigal. Yet somehow he was unable to make it and the programme had to be cancelled three times. The fourth time when an unexpected recording came up, for the time he was to call on Mr. Sharma, Mr. Krishna Teja decided to go. This despite the fact that senior artistes were singing that day. He hoped he could get back soon. But somehow thanks to the rains first, then the delay at another place where the discussions were being held Mr. Teja was terribly delayed. He was absolutely distressed.

How was he to explain his absence from the theatre to the producers and the artistes. He tried to call but could not get through. Mr. Krishna Teja was in utter mental agony. Don't worry said Mr. Sharma some one will take care. Mr. Krishna Teja was not convinced. Finally he was able to leave for his work spot. When he reached there he found to his dismay all the people, producers and all standing outside. Mr. Krishna Teja rushed to explain. The producer held out his hand and congratulated Mr. Teja on an excellent job done. Surely he must be joking thought Mr. Teja. But the man repeated his earlier statement and was joined in by one and all. What had transpired? Mr. Teja was wonder struck to know that some one had taken his place, a colleague who had no reason to be there and the scheduled work had been completed without a hitch. The Sathguru had indeed taken care. Mr. Krishna Teja put his heart and soul into composing the music for the touching lyrics written by Mr. Sharma & Mr. Bharani. What resulted are beautiful bajans in praise of Shri Seshadri Swamigal.

The names and addresses of all people who have contributed their experiences, have been made available at the end of the book.

Chapter No. 19

HIDDEN INSTRUCTIONS

Dr. E.K. Adisheshan writes "My father the late E.S. Krishna Iyer was a disciple of Swami Ramana Maharishi from 1920 to 1927. During his stay for seven years at the Ramanashram, he grew close to Shri Seshadri Swamigal.

My father soon became his principle disciple. Seshadri Samigal taught him all about God, Philosophy, religion, Spirituality, Dharma, faith, bhakti, prayer and the value of chanting mantras. Even after serving for seven years, he was not permitted to take sannyas for which my father had been aspiring for years. Swamigal told my father that he was destined to be a 'grihastha' not a Sannyasi, and told him that his mother awaited him. Finally he ordered my father to leave the Ashram and join his mother. He also told him to marry the girl whose alliance came first. So my father returned from the Ashram, to his mother and married as per the order of his Gurudev. Being a staunch devotee of Surya Bhagavan my father named me Adiseshan after the sun God 'Aditya' and his 'guru'. My father was a great philanthropist throughout his life. As per the advice of his Gurudev he was polite, humble, kind and sincere towards all fellow beings. He ended his life peacefully in 1956 without any suffering or ailment. I was told the entire life story of my father by my mother late E.S.Meenakshi Ammal".

Mr.Adiseshan's contribution gives us a deep insight into the mystery that Seshadri Swamigal was. His role as guide and preceptor in his disciples' lives is amplified here. Once the Sathguru takes a soul into his keeping then the very fibre of that life must necessarily change. As has been said Seshadri Swamigal was always involved in moulding the lives of his true disciples to give them greater peace, better wisdom. The shaping of their ideas and character was his



Father of Mr. Adisheshan with the Sathguru

special concern. In a heart that silently prays to the Sathguru there his presence is eternally assured.

Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal continues to convey messages to his disciples. Teachings which are conveyed, cover various aspects like the importance of Guru bakthi, the need for control of the mind, the way to live life and so on.

"The grace of a Guru is Vital."

"Do your duty and Guru's grace will come."

"Have firm faith in your Guru, blessings will come on their own."

"Pray for the strength to worship your Guru".

"A good disciple should give the Guru a good name."

"A guru's blessings cannot be bought, it has to come of its own accord".

"As water can be taken from the river according to the size of the vessel used, so also the Guru's grace can be obtained depending upon the soul."

"A Guru need not speak he can bless even with his eyes."

"Follow the Guru's words with faith".

"Without the Guru's blessing the Sishya's effort is in vain."

"The words of Mahan's are important and not to be questioned."

"Though at times it seems that the Guru is far away he never is."

"A Guru is pleased when he sees a good disciple."

"The Sathguru will remove all sorrow."

"Do your duty, without a thought for results. Surrender to the Guru with faith and give up worrying."

These teachings again stress the role that Guru Bakthi plays in human life. With total unquestioning surrender to the Guru the disciple lays the foundation for a peaceful life.

Having once surrendered to the Guru then there should be no concern about the results of action nor should there be any worry in the disciple's mind. The Guru would take care. Again faith was vital and the Guru's advice was never to be questioned. It should not either be ignored. The sishya's physical and spiritual well-being was of the gravest concern to the Guru and he would assure it all cost. To focus one's mind on the worship of one's Guru, calm in the awareness of his boundless mercy, man was to perform his duties in life without tension or fear, secure in the knowledge that the Guru would protect. Again it should be remembered that tests can be overcome through complete surrender. A sincere prayer to the Sathguru, to show the way to a soul groping in darkness, will always be answered.

"As you get butter when you churn milk, so you get Jnana when you work your way through the sea of Karma".

The Sathguru likens life to a sea and the varied experiences of life is the working off of Karma. This is compared to the churning of milk as a result of which butter is formed. Man as he works his way through life works off Karma and wisdom and clarity form within his mind, resulting in Jnana or enlightenment.

"Know yourself and without bothering about results cultivate Jnana".

Seshadri Swamigal emphasises the need for self-realization; to realize one's self should be man's greatest concern, regardless of anything else. With increased self realization would come enlightenment. Ephemeral happiness would then translate into lasting peace. The Sathguru outlines the path to a better realization advising that man concentrates on knowing himself undistracted by the fleeting pleasures of the world, he would then see the Atman within and understand his true nature.

"Be careful when you approach Mahans. If you give them bad things, they will give it back to you. If you give

them good things they will want you to to have it, only increased a hundred fold”.

The Sathguru cautions disciples on the need for extreme care when worshipping Mahans. If man gives a mahan something bad, that great one loses nothing. He simply returns it to the owner who will without doubt be worse off for it. If on the other hand the offering is good, then the Mahan, pleased, returns that to the aspirant only in far greater magnitudes. The sincere worshiper must necessarily benefit. The message here is that an enlightened one sees the intention behind man's every deed. He can see the heart and mind, the purity or the lack of it that envelopes each soul. A true heart, a genuine soul will be blessed, his sincere offerings will to him be returned multiplied manifold. The price for falsehood must be paid, a Saint has no place in his life for the baser qualities of man. They will be given back unto man, who might in his weakness be unable to cope with the repercussions. A Sathguru, a man of realization, must therefore be treated with utmost respect.

While concluding the chapter on upadesams, it must be said that the Sathguru expects his disciples to live up to the ideals expounded by him, compromises would meet with punishment. Even if this seemed hard to take, soon wisdom dawns that this is the way a kind teacher corrects the student. Once the Sathguru is convinced that the lesson has been learnt he becomes again a picture of compassion. Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamikal was one who was emphatic that spiritual growth was vital, self realization and devotion were to be a way of life, the transient was to be replaced by the permanent. In a world with different standards prevailing, living upto these ideals may seem difficult, at times even impossible. It is then that one should remember that help is always forthcoming to a helpless soul, searching for light, the Sathguru ever guides.

THE NEED FOR A GURU

यस्यैव स्फुरणं सदात्मकमसत्कल्पार्थकं भासते
साक्षात्तत्त्वमसीति वेदवचसा यो बोधयत्याश्रितान् ।
यत्साक्षात्करणाद्रवेन्न पुनरावृत्तिर्भवाम्भोनिधौ
तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

He by whose light the universe, which is unreal, appears as almost real and who graciously teaches the truth of Brahman (to the disciples seeking refuge in him) and who is realized through the comprehension of the meaning of the great Vedic statement Tattvamasi (Thou art That)--which realization alone puts an end to the cycle of Samsara and rebirth--to that Dakshinamurti, the supreme. Being, embodied in the auspicious and benign Guru, I offer my profound salutation.

The need of a Guru is thus highlighted and extolled in verse 3 of the Dakshinamoorthy stotram composed by Jagadguru Adi Sankara.

To go further

'acaryaran puruso veda'.

says the Chandogyopanishad.

Only one who is blessed by a teacher can know the Truth. All schools of Hindu thought, all its scriptures and doctrines stress that spiritual realization needs the grace of a Guru. Even Sathguru's before they assume their mantle as spiritual guides need to go through the formal ritual of initiation by a Guru. The Guru thus holds the key to the spiritual unfolding of a soul.

The Guru is a representative of the many God's man worships. He is accorded the highest status by the Hindu Sastras. As has been repeatedly stated Guru seva and Guru bakthi are the most important duties of a Sishya. Just as the

lotus blooms only when sunlight falls upon it, so the soul blooms like a lotus of a countless petals when the Guru's blessings awakens it. Then man sheds his cloak of ignorance and darkness and strides forth blazing a trail of truth and spiritual wisdom.

In a society where eternal values find no place, where cultural heritage has been severely eroded and where spirituality has been grossly neglected, lives based on truth are a rarity. When materialistic achievement is misunderstood for excellence, and the need for spiritual development not understood, a society built on shaky foundations results. While technical and materialistic development is vital to keep pace with a changing world the spiritual aspect of human existence needs necessarily to be emphasised for the peace and happiness of man as an individual and mankind as a whole. In a world where spiritual wisdom and guidance are hard to come by man gropes in vain for help.

In an illusory world authentic aid is scarce, masqueraders often pass off as enlightened teachers. They should not be mistaken for men of realization. In strife-ridden times the journey to the tranquil presence of a Sathguru is difficult. Yet if the quest is sincere, the need genuine, the Sathguru responds and draws the aspirant to him, bestowing the Light which then brightens the rocky path of man.

To those men and women who search for a deeper meaning to life, who understand the need for reinforcing the brittle structure of modern existence with the strength of Divine grace, to those who struggle to bear the burdens that life seems to have thrust upon them, hurt by an insensitive world an answer is available in the form of the Sathguru. "Where I am worshipped with faith and devotion there I always am". Words that have proven true in so many lives as the previous chapters narrate. To take that one small step towards him with faith and let him do for you what you can never do for yourself. To restore to life that essential quality

of Godliness and peace, to take the help of a paragon of mercy ever ready to remove the sorrows of man.

A question is asked time and again. Is a Guru necessary?

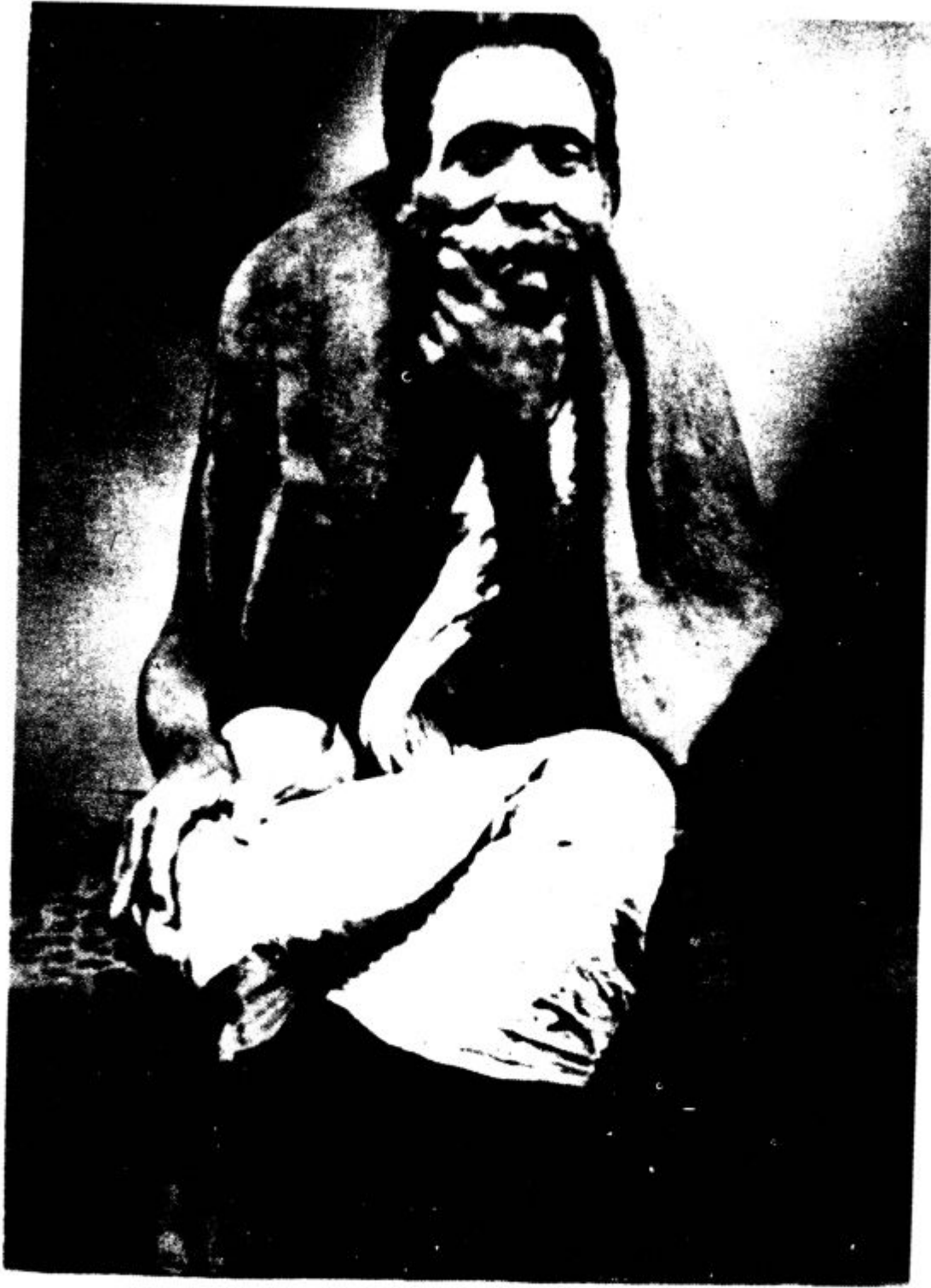
The Paramacharya of the Kanchi Mutt explains. "When man prays directly to God the blessings which accrue are far less than what worship to a Guru would bring. When we worship God directly the power of that prayer is minimal. We do not know how to pray earnestly from the innermost depths of our heart. Also we pray for our own selves. When we pray thus, we ask God for our well being alone. It is not that He will not lend a ear to these prayers. Yet by our limited power of worship, by which we pray for ourselves, how can he respond with any great blessing. If we, on the other hand, believe that the Guru is all, then he will intercede, praying to God on his disciple's behalf feeling that he alone must do all for this child who has entrusted his life to him. He is not like us, one who does not know God. The strength of his prayer is very great. He is one who lives in close proximity to that God who is so far away from us. When he prays and explains on our behalf with his superior power of worship then God has necessarily to listen. The Guru has nothing to loose, whatever happens to us. Yet with extreme mercy, he guides us, strives to remove our impurities remaining blemishless at all times praying to God exclusively for us; the value of that is indeed supreme. If God will bless us in whatever small way for our efforts and worship, when the Guru prays for us he will bless us completely. We see this in our worldly life as well. If we need something done from a minister or Governor we can hardly approach them ourselves. The work is better accomplished if some one who is close to them is approached. Because of their recommendation the governor does what has to be done without so much as a glance at us. We do not need to go to God, it is enough if we go to the Guru, who is capable of praying to God for us, far better than we ourselves can."

When man lives under the illusion that he knows all has conquered all, then a Guru does not seem, to his deluded mind, essential. Yet when the unfortunate happens and the impermanent gives way, as it inevitably must, then comes darkness and with it the enlightenment that the realms unknown to the human mind are vast, the peaks, unconquered, innumerable. The search begins, the illusion of complete knowledge ceases and man becomes a child in quest of his true nature. The glory of the Atman. The Guru guides, the Guru protects, the Guru teaches, the Guru bears the burdens of his disciples, He virtually carries man to his ultimate destination. It is ignorance to say a Guru is not needed, wisdom dawns when the place fills in one's own life and the sublime joy of living at the feet of a great master is experienced for one self.

The life story of Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal teaches man a better way of life, true to his inherent nature. One with God and aware of the, Atman or eternal light within, to live life for the betterment of oneself and society. In gentle compassion the life of Shri Seshadri Swamigal reminds man of so many things forgotten today, and the paramount importance of remembering them, to the sincere aspirant his help is guaranteed as the lives of his disciples testify. To surrender at his feet in the same way that a stick held upright would fall, if dropped. The Sathguru will take care. The key, rests with man.

गुरुवे सर्वलोकानां भिषजे भवरोगिणाम् ।
निघये सर्वविद्यानां दक्षिणामूर्तये नमः ॥

*Guruvave Sarva Lokanam
Bheshaje Bhava Roginam
Nidhayae Sarva Vidyanam
Dhakshinamoorthyae Namaha.*



Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal

CONCLUSION

Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal is a soul beyond compare. The degree of his realization cannot be adequately conveyed in words. In times of spiritual dullness such extraordinary enlightenment is not even entirely understood. This biography is an attempt to bring man closer to a life that scaled sublime heights incomparable. Seshadri Swamigal's role as Guru, eternal companion and guide have been portrayed. Human effort must however necessarily fall short of the actual Truth when defining a life story that is beyond all definition. As the Sathguru broke out of a locked room unchecked by the barriers surrounding him, so his vastness stretches far beyond the confines of any book or biography. To know him is to know the unknowable. While this biography can serve as an introduction to the revered Sathguru, the rest of the story can be found echoed within the hearts of disciples, the continuing saga of his endless compassion, the Eternal Light that is reflected in many a soul. Let the light of this divine beacon help man make his way in peace through life to blend, at the end, with the Light Supreme.

PRANAM

ADDRESSES

The addresses of disciples whose experiences have been mentioned in the book.

1. Mr. Ramakrishnan
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2. Mr. A. Nagarajan
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3. Mr. C.R. Subramaniyan
18, Veeraswamy Street
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Madras - 33
4. Mr. L.R. Sridar
Officer
Indian Bank
Madras - 1
5. Mr & Mrs. Ramamoorthy
6, Lady Desikachari Road
Mylapore
Madras - 4
6. Mr. S. Muthuveeru
15, First Street
East Abhiramapuram
Mylapore, Madras - 4
7. Mr. Ragavan
45, Lakshmi Nagar
Chrompet
Madras - 44
8. Mr. G. Arunachalam
No.2, I.T.I. Quarters
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9. Mr. T.R. Nagarajan
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10. Mr. V. Kalidoss
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16. Mr. S. Anantharaman
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17. Mr. Rama Varma
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18. Mr. Venkatraman
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19. Mr. V. Balasubramanian
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20. Smt. Vasantha Seshadri
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21. Mr & Mrs. Barani
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A Block,
Silver Park Apartments,
24, Thanikachalam Road,
T. Nagar,
Madras - 17.

GLOSSARY

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Swarupam | - Natural form |
| 2. Gothram | - Lineage |
| 3. Mangala Shasti Vratam | - Prayer every shasti day for all good reasons |
| 4. Mangala Kumara Vratam | - Prayers to Lord Muruga for all good things |
| 5. Pradosam | - The day before the full or new moon, a good time for the worship of Lord Shiva |
| 6. Mantra Sastra Rahasyam | - The secret of ancient mantras |
| 7. Ghandarvas | - Celestial beings |
| 8. Jeevan muktha | - One who has transcended birth and death |
| 9. Swastika asana | - A yogic posture |
| 10. Sannadhi | - Shrine |
| 11. Adhistanam | - The tomb of a Mahan |
| 12. Samadhi | - Tomb |
| 13. Abishekam | - Oblations of milk, water, honey etc., |
| 14. Thirukalyanaam | - Celestial marriage |
| 15. Bhakthi | - Devotion |
| 16. Seva | - Service |
| 17. Upasakar | - Follower |
| 18. Sadhana | - Accomplishment |
| 19. Upanyas | - Discourse |
| 20. Siddhar | - One merged in God |
| 21. Sama Drishti | - Same sightedness |
| 22. Sishya | - Disciple |
| 23. Sundara Kandam | - An important chapter from the Ramanayana |
| 24. Homam | - Offering oblations to God through a conscrated fire. |



The Sathguru Shri Seshadri Swamigal Brindavanam Trust was formed in 1991 to serve society based on the ideals and teachings of Shri Seshadri Swamigal. The project envisages a main shrine dedicated to the Sathguru, a meditation hall and shrines for prescribed deities. Also proposed are a destitute home, a poor feeding centre as well as medical facilities, allopathic and siddha, for the economically backward. The guiding light of the Sathguru, will from here, shine forth upon the world. The call goes out to all disciples to lend a helping hand to this worthy venture.